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WASHINGTON IRVING.

AMERICAN AUTHORS

FOR

YOUNG FOLKS

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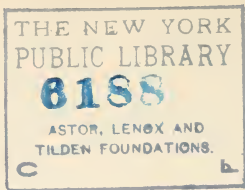
AMANDA B. HARRIS

Author of

Wild Flowers and Where they Grew
Field, Wood, and Meadow Rambles
Dooryard Folks
and others

BOSTON

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PLEASANT AUTHORS FOR YOUNG FOLKS.

I.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

LET us suppose," as that charming story-teller, Annie Keary, used to begin, "let us suppose" that these young people have never read Washington Irving, or never read him except in school-book "exercises." There they may have had a page or two out of Rip Van Winkle; perhaps the ludicrous description of Ichabod Crane, his school and his horse; possibly a mutilated chapter from the *Alhambra*—just enough to give a taste, yet just enough to spoil the subject.

But do they really know Rip, and his dog Wolf? Poor vagabond Rip with his twenty years' sleep!

If not, they have missed one of the masterpieces of English prose, not a sentence of which could be spared. Some things are simply perfect, complete, all right just as they stand, so that

One shade the more, one ray the less
Would half impair the nameless grace,

and this is of the happy number — an inspiration.

Nor is there anything to be taken from or added to the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Have you, my young people, read it as it stands — all about the perturbations and whimsicalities of pedagogue Ichabod, and that distracting piece of naughtiness, Katrina Van Tassel? Have you ever tried to imagine Sleepy Hollow, that drowsy place, immortal valley on the Hudson that will be famous as long as American literature lasts? or, in your “mind’s eye” have you seen the queer, gabled, Dutch houses of old Knickerbocker New York, in the days of the renowned Wouter Van Twiller? where the burgher used to sit “on the bench at the door of his white-washed house,” under the sycamore or willow and smoke the sultry afternoon through, “listening to

the clucking of his hens, the cackling of his geese, and the sonorous grunting of his swine," where, "the grass grew quietly in the highway — the bleating sheep and frolicsome calves sported about the verdant ridge where now the Broadway loungers take their morning stroll."

And have you been in the Alhambra, and heard the drip of the fountain in the court of that beautiful Morisco palace, while you listened to legends of Granada till the streets seemed alive with Moorish warriors, and the past of five centuries ago came back? If not, you do not know Irving; for it is Dutch life on the Hudson and in New Amsterdam, and the stories of Moorish ascendancy and of conquest in Spain, which most truly represent him.

Irving's subjects can be put easily into groups, with few exceptions; and any one who would thoroughly read him, can take his books in that way.

It would hardly be worth your while to spare the time for the Salmagundi papers, which were the earliest he wrote; and you could make a long skip over years and space, as well as titles, to Spain,

and begin there. So you come at once to some of his best work, to be sure; but what better starting place, for there you have several volumes which belong together and make a brilliant period in romantic history.

So Spain be it then; and first, *Legends of the Conquest of Spain*, then, in this order, although it is not the one in which they were written, *Moorish Chronicles*, *Tales of the Alhambra*, *Chronicles of the Conquest of Granada*. By that time you will be steeped in romantic adventure by land, and will be ready for the *Life of Columbus*, and then for *Spanish Voyages of Discovery*, which come right along chronologically.

Of the Spanish books, the *Columbus* was the first written. The author had already won fame when in 1826 he made his temporary home in Madrid, and with abundance of public documents and private manuscripts at hand, including the archives of the Columbus family, prepared the life of the great navigator, making the only full account there is in English, with all the charm of Irving's incomparable style.

This book hath Kinship with the epic old,
That sings of Ithacus, the searcher bold :
The Homer touch — the purple light is here,
That makes men heroes, heroes gods appear !

What a happy inspiration was that which came to him of writing it ! for out of it grew all the others. He had a great deal of sentiment and romance about him, and that was the country of all the world to fascinate him ; and the more he wrote of Spain, the more the witchery of the subject took hold of him. Happy inspiration in its results to us and to all future readers and travellers. He enriched our literature with the treasures he brought forth, and cast such a spell over the country itself that people from all lands where his name is known visit the Alhambra, because by the magic of his genius, that old castelated palace has become consecrated with

The light that never was on sea or land.

He chose a period rich in romantic episodes and brilliant deeds, when "every man lived with sword in hand," and there was "scarcely a commanding

cliff or hill-top but had its castle," and gave us the chronicles of the *Conquest of Granada*, which he is said to have himself regarded as almost the best of all he had written, when in the maturity of his powers and before the fire of enthusiasm had begun to die out; he was aglow with his subject, as a writer should be, full of it, living while he wrote "in a world of dreams." It is a picturesque book; one for boys to revel in, with its alarms and tumults, its cavalcades of Moorish warriors, its drums and trumpets, banners and glitter of arms; the clang of weapons, the tramp of mailed men, the neighing and clattering of steeds, the sounds of war, of triumph, are heard along its pages; one sees the mountain defiles, the city with its Moorish architecture, the plains where armies meet, Ferdinand and Isabella in royal state, the last Moorish king, Saracen and Christian, cavalier and monk — what pageants, what splendor and stir, what pictures, what an unfolding of events!

I come now, by this arrangement (which you understand is purely arbitrary, but which seems to me a convenient one for you), to the chief biog-

raphies; *Mahomet and his Successors*, which does not profess to do anything more than put into handy volume shape the facts and legends about the prophet; the *Life of Oliver Goldsmith*, one of the most captivating of books, to which Irving gave "as graphic a style," he said, as he could command, being himself in love with his subject—a rarely attractive subject, too, was warm-hearted, homely, ungainly, thriftless, amiable "Goldy," poor Goldy! with his buoyancy, his haps and mishaps, his improvidence, his irresponsibility, his wandering life, his impulses that were often right but as likely to be wrong—was there ever such another, such a luckless man, but thrice fortunate in the gentle and genial humorist who wrote his life; and third, Irving's last work, on which he was engaged for years, broken by many interruptions of ill-health and a long absence in Europe, the *Life of Washington*, full of incident, and altogether a good thing, though without the flashes of genius of some of his earlier productions.

Still another group—his western books, made, says some one, "for the market," but capital read-

ing for all that: *A Tour on the Prairies, Astoria,* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. It was in 1832 that he took his trip, and wrote about it graphically—he could not have done otherwise—then, under the second title, a history of the fur trade which has all the elements for a story, and last, the adventures of a French soldier, Bonneville who became a famous hunter and trapper and spent three years among or beyond the Rocky Mountains prior to 1835.

But he might have written all these and yet would not have been in the sense that he now is, *our* Irving, but for the Mynheers, Rip, Ichabod, Sleepy Hollow, Communipan, Mannahata, Wolfert's Roost and the Dutch traditions belonging to them. Here he is purely American, without an imitator, for after his Knickerbocker and kindred papers, who so presumptuous as to attempt to follow? Full of "local color," as artists say, he has made that one portion of our country classic ground. The Hudson River valley is so full of Irving that not a traveller can pass that way without being reminded of him.

Next after the *Salmagundi Papers* (which have that admirable sketch, "The Little Man in Black"), he published in 1809, being then twenty-six years old, that masterly piece of humorous writing, as original as it is whimsical, Diedrich Knickerbocker's *History of New York*. It is too wordy, and the humor is sometimes broad, but irresistibly droll and full of merriment from beginning to end. Fancy the wicked enjoyment Irving must have had in describing those old Dutch worthies, like Wouter Van Twiller, who "conceived every object on so comprehensive a scale that he had not room in his head to turn it over and examine both sides of it, so that he always remained in doubt, merely in consequence of the magnitude of his ideas," who had lived in the world for years "without feeling the least curiosity to know whether the sun revolved round it, or it round the sun." Over the queer doings and thunderings, the rollicking life of those smoking, eating, drinking, dozing Dutch founders of New Amsterdam Sir Walter Scott said he laughed till his sides ached.

Ten years later came into print the first part of

The Sketch-Book, made up of refined essays, which at once brought him fame in England, but “floated,” as one writer says, by “Rip Van Winkle,” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” He further says that if in the changes that may come “the bulk of Irving’s works shall go out of print, a volume made up of his Knickerbocker history and the legends relating to the region of New York and the Hudson would survive as long as anything that has been produced in this country.”

For aught we know, that story of Rip is, in some form, as old as the world; for similar traditions of long sleep and awakening to strangest of surprises are in oriental and in classic literature and may be in the folk-lore of all nations — but what a use he made of it! And you know how Joe Jefferson has personated the character — I hardly dare venture to guess how many times. Several years after the death of Irving, it was dramatized by Dion Boucicault, who said to the actor, “I would prefer to start him in the play as a young scamp — thoughtless, gay, just such a curly-headed fellow as all the village girls would love and the children and dogs would run

after ; ” and he did, though at first Jefferson “ threw up his hands in despair ” at the new idea. Boucicault did not call it much of a literary production and said when it was done, “ It is a poor thing, Joe.” He replied, “ Well, it is good enough for me.” And it was a hit. What houses have laughed and wept over it, and how many hearts have been thrilled by that one question, “ Are we so soon forgot when we are gone ? ”

Before Washington Irving we had no American literature ; writers, it is true, but he was the first to make it known abroad if he may not indeed be said to have begun to create it. His style had a quality which at once commanded attention. To see in what that literary excellence consisted let us take at random a passage out of *Rip Van Winkle* ; this :

In a long ramble of the kind, on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favourite sport of squirrel-shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll cov-

ered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees, he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glossy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

It is a bit of simple description, nothing more, but it tells a great deal in few words and fitting. Take it apart, analyze it, define the words, mark well the construction and relations, and see if it could be improved, if anything could be spared. It looks like an easy thing to do to write in that style, but try it, and you will find that you are baffled, that there is a subtle something which will elude you; the words and sentences will, under your hand, become provokingly unmanageable; you will find it exceedingly difficult to say just what you wish to in just the right words, no others, no more, and no less.

There is a fitness, grace, dignity, refinement and elegance about the style of Washington Irving

which have always been recognized and admired. It is true that it lacks in nerve and virile force when brought into comparison with some modern writers. One page of Carlyle has more brawn and muscle, more "attack" in it, so to speak, than the longest essay that Irving ever wrote; nevertheless, it is not without power of its own — as in Bryant's highly finished verse, the polishing has not worn it away to insipidity; no one feels the lack of vigor, and all do feel its charm. It is the language of a cultivated gentleman whose habit of thought was that of a gentleman, of one accustomed to think in pure, good English as well as speak and write it — indeed the latter would follow as a matter of course. In 1835 the *North American Review* pronounced him "the best living writer of English prose."

You will notice another thing, and that is that he likes to leave a pleasant impression; unlike some authors, who make you uncomfortable, he pleases and entertains. Yet he was never sanguine about the result of his writing, being so sensitive that a word of adverse criticism "upset" him for days; he was always inclined to depreciate himself,

was capricious about his fits of working, and had long periods of feeling incompetent to do anything. When *The Sketch-Book* came into print, it met with such success that he was fairly overpowered and was afraid he could never do so well again; and yet that was almost at the beginning of his literary career, and besides all the books named above, he afterwards wrote of the essay-ish or story kind, *The Tales of a Traveller*, *Wolfert's Roost*, *Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey*, the collection called *Crayon Miscellany*, and those flattering impressions of English life in a country home, *Bracebridge Hall*, told in a manner which constantly reminds one of Addison and the Sir Roger de Coverley papers.

Washington Irving was born in New York City, April 3, 1783, and as a boy is described as "handsome, tender-hearted, truthful, susceptible," a "dawdler in routine studies," but, boy-like, fond of *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Sinbad*, *Orlando Furioso*, and a devourer of "books of voyages and travels," growing up so delicate that at twenty-one he was sent for his health to Europe, where he picked up much general information and

knowledge of the world, all of which came into use when he began to write. He became a great favorite in society, had eyes that laughed and a smile which no one could resist; and his winning qualities stayed by him through life.

He was away two years, went abroad again in 1815 for a short sojourn, but remained seventeen, then came home to settle down as he hoped, but in 1842 was appointed Minister to Spain and spent the next four years at the court of Madrid. The story of his life is too well known to need telling.

Home once more, and for good, with his house full of nieces and other near relatives, at his "dear, little Sunnyside," the Dutch stone house over-run with ivy from a slip brought from fair Melrose, a poet's retreat, now hallowed and historic, where honored and beloved he spent his remaining years; going down now and then to New York, where George William Curtis says he used to see him, a "quaint figure in the little Talma cloak," with a "springing step and cheery twinkle of the eye as he passed along Broadway." (You will find about him in one of the "Easy Chair" papers, and see

how he looked in his old age with his “chirping, cheery, old school air.”)

He died on the 28th of November, 1859, and was buried near his favorite Sleepy Hollow.

NOTE. — A nearly complete list of his works is as follows : *Salmagundi, History of New York, Sketch-Book, Bracebridge Hall, Tales of a Traveller, Life of Columbus, Conquest of Granada, Tales of the Alhambra, Moorish Chronicles, Legends of the Conquest of Spain, Spanish Voyages, Tour on the Prairies, Astoria, Adventures of Captain Bonneville, Life of Margaret Davidson, Life of Goldsmith, Life of Campbell, Life of Mahomet, Wolfert's Roost, Crayon Papers, Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey, Life of Washington.* (It is not practicable to give each title with exactness, as they vary in different editions, and collections have been published with varying titles.) Pierre M. Irving, a nephew, edited his *Life and Letters*, and Charles Dudley Warner has lately edited a *Life of Washington Irving*, for the “American Men of Letters” Series. A sketch of “Sunnyside and its Proprietor” may be found in Tuckerman's *Homes of American Authors*; and, finally, the “Irving Centenary Number” of *The Critic* gives several personal reminiscences and criticisms and a bibliography. Recently there has been published a luxurious book, by A. E. P. Searing, with more than fifty engravings of scenery, entitled *The Land of Rip Van Winkle*.



J. Fenimore Cooper

II.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER.

THE second writer to show to the world that we in America were to have a literature of our own, was the man whose name stands above. Irving was just beginning to be famous when Cooper began. It is a fact worth remembering, too, that it was about the period when Walter Scott was at the height of his popularity, and that this new American novelist who was destined to similar popularity among his own countrymen, launched his first book in the same year (1820) that *Ivanhoe* appeared.

It was from no purpose, from no following a natural bent, but the result of an impulse, an unexpected coming true of what was spoken in sportive boast, that made Cooper an author. Nothing in his past had turned him in that direction ; he

was thirty years old, and having no special profession, had apparently settled down as a sort of gentleman farmer, engaged in looking after his estate, planting trees and living the country life he was always so fond of. That this should have been broken in upon the way it was, and that he should have written more than thirty novels besides other books during the next thirty years, were circumstances that must have seemed to him as extraordinary as they do to us.

He happened one day to be reading to his wife an English society novel, and not being pleased with it, he laid it down, saying, "I believe I could write a better story myself," and set to work and wrote *Precaution*; whether as good or not, tradition does not tell, but probably quite equal to any of its class — which is not saying that it is in the least attractive. He had a poor opinion of it, and perhaps there his authorship might have ended but for some of his friends, who said as he had done fairly well with a subject he knew nothing about — English society — he must try his hand at something he was acquainted with.

The result was *The Spy*, in which he created one of his best-known characters from humble life, Harvey Birch. The scene where the story was laid was the battle-ground of a great deal of partisan warfare during the Revolution, and some of the incidents he worked up he had heard from the lips of survivors. The pictures of country life and hospitality at the Westchester home were no doubt true to the life; and who can doubt, while he laughs over it, that the good cheer at the grand dinner-party at the Locusts had some foundation in fact? — when “the formal procession from the kitchen to the parlor commenced,” and Cæsar led the van, supporting a turkey on the palms of his hands, the servant of Captain Lawton following with a Virginia ham, next the valet of Colonel Wellmere with fricasseed chickens and oyster patties, after him the attendant of Doctor Sitgreaves with an enormous tureen of soup, next another trooper with a pair of roasted ducks, followed by a white servant boy groaning under a load of vegetables; all these things having been deposited on the table, Cæsar led the march back to the kitchen, soon re-

turning again, at the head of the procession, conveying "whole flocks of pigeons, certain beves of quails, shoals of flat-fish, bass, and sundry woodcock; and the third attack brought potatoes, onions, beets, cold-slaw, rice, and all the other minutiae of a goodly dinner."

The next subject chosen was the frontier life which he had been familiar with in his childhood in the valley of the Otsego, and he wrote *The Pioneers*. It has been complained of it that the descriptions clog the story, but therein, and in the introduction of Natty Bumppo, lies the charm of the book. Every chapter shows that it was written with love and how happy he was in bringing out of the past all those events and scenes of a backwoodsman's life. The aspects of winter scenery, the wood-chopping, the maple-sugar making, the fishing and woodcraft, the hunting, and the spear-
ing of bass by torchlight, are some of its best points; and the free-hand touch in that wilderness story was never surpassed in the later and more artistic novels of the "Leather Stocking Series," of which this was pioneer in fact as well as title.

Just here you may need to be reminded that Cooper was one of the first to describe natural scenery, and mark the changes of the sylvan year; not with the fine analysis and discrimination of such later writers as Thoreau and John Burroughs, but with broad sweeps, which served well their purpose since we were made to feel that we were there, in the forest, that the freshness of the primitive wilderness was ours, the aroma of the pines and hemlocks in every breath of the air, that any moment a deer might bound across our path, that civilization was away behind — we had left it and come joyfully into this new, green, rustling, balsam-scented world where Leather Stocking roamed with all the freedom of Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, without Robin's outlaw doings.

No sooner had Cooper begun on this line of fiction, than a circumstance occurred which directed him into another, and he wrote a sea story. At a dinner party where he was present, the conversation turned on *The Pirate* of Sir Walter Scott, just published, in which the eye of one skilled in nautical affairs could discern some errors that none

but a landsman would have fallen into. Our author, who in his youth had spent a year before the mast in a merchant vessel, and been midshipman three years, attempted to convince the company that if Scott had been a seaman he could have made a more effectual use of his materials ; and so thinking, “ I must write one more book — a sea tale — to see what can be done in that way by a sailor,” he said to his wife.

Thus *The Pilot* had its origin, with John Paul Jones for the leading personage, though the true hero was another of his strong characters out of humble life. Long Tom Coffin of Nantucket, who was born on the ocean and chose to die there, who could not find his way when he was put on shore, who believed it was a “rank lie” those men had told him, that there “was as much arth as water in the world ;” for, said he :

I’ve sailed with a blowing sheet months an-end without falling in with as much land or rock as would answer a gull to lay its eggs on. . . . Give me a plenty of sea-room and good canvas, where there is no occasion for pilots at all, sir. For my part, I was born on board a chibacco-man,

and never could see the use of more land than here and there a small island to raise a few vegetables and to dry your fish on.

Cooper meant to have "resuscitated" him in later stories, as he did Natty Bumppo; but it is perhaps quite as well that our last look of the simple-hearted old cockswain was on the morning after that night of terror, when he went down, alone, with the vessel he loved so well, sinking with the wreck of the *Ariel* in the overwhelming sea. In the later sea-stories, of more or less excellence, more skilfully constructed, he never surpassed in thrilling power two or three scenes in this.

In the succession of novels, he varied from land to ocean, the sea-stories coming along at intervals, being written at different places. *The Red Rover* came into life at a little hamlet near Paris (during a long residence of himself and family in Europe), whence his imagination transported him to the scene of the opening chapters, Newport, Rhode Island, where we make the acquaintance of the vessels and men who are to be concerned in those exciting events, pursuit, sea-fight, wreck, height-

ened by the terrors of a tornado — so rapid, so vivid, so well managed that we half incline to place it second in merit. *The Water Witch*, written two years later, has a jaunty, foreign air, and can more properly be called a romance. *The Wing and Iwing* was a favorite with him, though just why one can hardly see; the vessel is a French privateer in the Mediterranean, and the sailors and other characters are of several nationalities, chief among them Ithuel Bolt, one of the New Englanders whom Cooper had little love for, usually making them hypocrites, or coarse and vulgar. In the same year with the last, was written *The Two Admirals*, one of the most spirited, narrating the evolutions of fleets instead of single ships.

He composed and wrote rapidly, and no sooner was one off his hands than he planned another, sometimes carrying along two together, as in the case of *Jack Tier* and *The Crater*, neither of which ranks with his best, while both have a good deal of power in certain chapters and keep their interest nearly to the end. The time of the first is the Mexican War, and the action takes place near the

Dry Tortugas and neighboring reefs; thus Cooper takes advantage of many localities, and uses mutiny, abandonment, all thrilling episodes on board ship and war of elements, and puts a seaman's knowledge and resources to severest test. There is not one of the sea-stories without brilliant and commanding passages. In *Jack Tier* is drawn with a bold hand one type of captain, that cruel, coarse "old sea-dog, Stephen Spike, skipper of the *Molly Swash*," and the escape from the sharks, the occurrences at the lighthouse and the firing at the supposed ghost of the man Spike had abandoned to his fate are in the author's best manner. As for *The Crater* it is like Jules Verne in preposterous improbability, but the details of life there and at Rancocus Island are Robinson Crusoe-ish in their fascination.

Another which tells how *The Sea Lions*, two ships of the same name, go down to the southern seas in search of seals, has some strong chapters where the men are ice-bound and experience the awful rigors of an antarctic winter; and probably no such picture of the appalling desolation of Cape

Horn and the loneliness of the infinite ocean can be found in any other writing :

Directly ahead of the schooner rose a sort of pyramid of broken rocks, which occupying a small island stood isolated in a measure, and some distance in advance of other and equally ragged ranges of mountains, which belonged also to islands detached from the mainland thousands of years before, under some violent convulsion of nature. . . .

“ You know the spot, do you, Stephen ? ” demanded Boswell Gardner, with interest.

“ Yes, sir, there’s no mistake. That’s the Horn. Eleven times have I doubled it, and this is the third time that I’ve been so close in as to get a fair sight of it. Once I went inside as I’ve told you, sir.”

“ I have doubled it six times myself,” said Gardner, “ but never saw it before. Most navigators give it a wide berth. ’Tis said to be the stormiest place on the known earth.”

The men had climbed it, and saw the limitless of world water : —

The earth probably does not contain a more remarkable sentinel than this pyramid on which our hero had now taken his station. There it stood, actually the Ultima Thule of this vast continent. . . . The eye saw to the right, the Pacific ; in front was the Southern or Antarctic ocean, and to the left was the great Atlantic.

True or imaginary, Cooper never drew a more vivid picture than in that thirteenth chapter, of which a few extracts give only a faint idea.

Afloat and Ashore again takes him on the sea ; this, his first book in autobiographic form, leaves the hero drowning, but the sequel, *Miles Wallingford*, picks him up. *Satanstoe*, also an autobiography, has a sequel, *The Chainbearer*. The four have much to do with colonial life in New York ; doubtless "Clawbonny," the home of Miles, is a fair representation, with its one-story, gabled stone house, "to which had been added until the whole structure got to resemble a cluster of cottages thrown together without the least attention to order or regularity," orchards, meadows, ploughed fields all around, barns, granaries of solid stone, a comfortable, cosey country place. Lucy Harding in the two stories, and Anneke Mordaunt in *Satanstoe*, are Cooper's most clearly defined heroines. Usually they are so vague and tame there is nothing to remember them by ; there is hardly so much stamina in them all as would furnish one Jane Eyre, or Jeanie Deans, or Dinah Morris.

You cannot even tell in what story Alice was, or what Cora did, or keep Ellen separate in your mind from Elizabeth or Mabel. They are lovely, or they would not be heroines, and for the same reason they are loved; they journey into the wilderness and have adventures, but the pattern is much the same wherever found.

Satanstoe is a neck of land, a farm, the home of the Littlepage family, from which the young heir goes forth, seeing the word up towards the frontier, Albany way, at a period of which Mrs. Grant wrote in her *American Lady*, which Cooper often refers to and would have advised one to take in collateral reading, as he would Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, if it had then been written. In this spirited and fine novel, the heir, Corny, sees Dutch life, has experiences in Albany, goes coasting in the streets and engages in the mad pranks of the young men, makes the acquaintance of that vigorously drawn roysterer, Guert Ten Eyck, and is one of the party who have the sleighride on the Hudson on the eve when the ice is breaking up—one of the most curdling passages in modern fiction. *The Chain-*

bearer continues the narrative, with less spirit, however, till you come to the episode of the squatters, Thousandacres, his gaunt wife, his half-savage sons and the girl, Lowina, which is drawn with a masterly hand.

It is not practicable in one short paper to run



OTSEGO HALL.—FROM DRAWING BY MISS COOPER.

over the whole of Cooper's novels. He was a very uneven writer; a few of the books are poor and tiresome, others, like *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* and *Wyandotte*, are of medium quality, while certain of the sea-stories and the *Leather-Stocking Tales* are of superlative excellence. These need no exposi-

tion, no commendation. He was master of that kind of fiction which owes its interest to incident and adventures; swift in movement, picturesque in treatment. How fresh and exhilarating after the staple novels of mediæval life, castles, knight-errantry, kings and courts, society in foreign capitals, artificiality, must have been *The Pioneers* and those that followed in the series! He had created a new kind of romance. These stories of life on the frontier, of the backwoodsmen, Indians, the wilderness, were a novelty. We have to thank him for and give him the honor of the true American novel in literature; and at this late day no one need feel called upon to find fault with him for not being artistic, or for not developing character. Later writers may and do excel in those respects, but we have only one Cooper, and his best books hold the ground, always popular with a large class.

The question has been asked if he really knew the man, "Natty Bumppo." It does not matter. Was he real? Every schoolboy believes in him, almost from the moment when he appears, standing six feet in his stockings, tall, wiry, sandy-haired,

with gray eyes under shaggy brows, in fox-skin cap, in coat and leggings and moccasins of deer-skin, with leathern pouch, powder horn, rifle, and the old hound, Hector. He refuses to be made a myth of. Leather Stocking has a foothold on the soil, and he will keep it.

The author had an intimate fondness for him. Clearly to Cooper he was real. See how careful a study he makes of his character in the ninth chapter of *The Pathfinder*; if it had been George Washington, he would not have done it more faithfully; and in *Home as Found* Eve Effingham says:

There, near the small house that is erected over a spring of delicious water, stood the hut of Natty Bumppo, once known throughout all these mountains as a renowned hunter; a man who had the simplicity of a woodsman, the heroism of a savage, the faith of a Christian, and the feelings of a poet. A better than he, after his fashion, seldom lived.

In the preface to *The Pathfinder* is an explanation of the order in which the five stories of The Leather Stocking series naturally come. The latest of Cooper's critics, Prof. Lounsbury, says:

“The life of Leather Stocking was now a complete drama in five acts; beginning with the first war-path in *The Deerslayer*, followed by his career of activity and love in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*, and his old age and death in *The Pioneers* and *The Prairie*.”

Of Cooper's Indians, he says:

“But whether his representation be true or false, it has from that time to this profoundly affected public opinion. Throughout the whole civilized world the conception of the Indian character as Cooper drew it in *The Last of the Mohicans*, and further elaborated it in the later *Leather-Stocking Tales*, has taken permanent hold of the imaginations of men.”

For yourselves, you must bring your own judgment to bear on the question after you have read *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, and *Montcalm and Wolfe* by Parkman — history set against romance.

From the “Introductions,” by the author's daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper, in a late edition of the novels, many facts about his life may be gathered, and at the end are notes about the ancestral home on Otsego Lake. Especially valua-

ble are the description and notes in *The Pioneers*. In scenes of *The Deerslayer* he closely describes the Otsego prior to the time when the first rude settlement was begun on its banks. The rock of the rendezvous is still known as Otsego Rock. In the ninth and eleventh chapters of *Home as Found*, the mountain called "The Vision" and the village of Templeton (before described in *The Pioneers*) show us the Cooper home. It is interesting to trace Cooper and his pursuits in this way.

He was born in Burlington, N. J., September 15, 1790, and two months later the family moved up into the new country near the head-waters of the Susquehanna on Otsego Lake, where he spent his childhood and his later years. It was the place dearest on earth to him; he loved every inch of its soil, and the Lake (the Glimmerglass of his novels), was a perpetual delight to him. He enjoyed a farm he had up among the hills, called the "Chalet," and was fond of all domestic animals; had a favorite cat which sat on his shoulder while he wrote, and when he visited the barn quarters a whole procession of poultry, cows, oxen, horses,

dogs, cats, would gather about him and follow him.

He died in Cooperstown, September 14, 1851. The town, whose name is a memorial of him, keeps a reminder of his novels in the names given to picturesque spots he had already made the world familiar with; the little steamer that plies on the lake is called the *Natty Bumppo*, and a marble statue of Natty, rifle in hand and hound looking up into his face, has been placed on a point overlooking the cemetery where Cooper is buried.

NOTE.— A list of Cooper's novels is as follows: *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*, *The Pilot*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Red Rover*, *The Prairie*, *The Water Witch*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Deerslayer*, *The Two Admirals*, *The Wing-and-Wing*, *Afloat and Ashore*, *Miles Wallingford*, *Satanstoe*, *The Chainbearer*, *The Sea-Lions*, *The Bravo*, *Jack Tier*, *The Crater*, *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, *Wyandotte*, *Homeward Bound*, *Home as Found*, *Lionel Lincoln*, *The Headsman*, *Mercedes of Castile*, *The Heidenmauer*, *The Red-Skins*, *The Monikins*, *Precaution*, *The Oak Openings*, *The Ways of the Hour*. The six last named are poor, and the four next preceding are of comparatively small value. It is better to read the best ones twice than spend time on the others. He wrote several volumes of travels, other miscellaneous works, and a history of the navy of the United States, and biographies of distinguished American naval officers. As it was his request that no "authorized account of his life" be written, there is no biography of importance except that in the American "Men of Letters" Series, by Professor Lounsbury, which gives a fine critical estimate of his writings.



WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT.

III.

WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT.

IF you wish to see how highly favored you are in your historians, in your Macaulay and Green, your Bancroft and Prescott and Palfrey and Motley and Parkman, with all their richness of language, their pleasant way of using incidents and power of making history attractive, you need to be put on a probation of Hume — a penitential one you would find it — till you came to fully appreciate your privileges and see what you have to be thankful for.

Hume was the bane of my childhood. It was early impressed upon me, enjoined upon me, that I must read Hume's *History of England*. I must forego the Ossian, the Shenstone, the Campbell, the Burns, the *Spectator*, the *Rambler*, and (saddest of all) *The Scottish Chiefs*, which stood, all gay in scarlet morocco and gilding, or rich in russet, a

tempting row of twenty-six volumes on the upper shelf. Next below, sizing up, were books of the stature of *Chesterfield's Letters*, Tytler, the *Idler*, Junius' Letters and Bennett's Letters; and then that almost hateful row of nine — I doubt not they are in all old-fashioned libraries in just the same style of binding — in leathern covers, with a red morocco strip near the top, like a bandage, for the gilt-lettered title, and a green one near the bottom for volume and author, part labeled "Hume," then three "Smollett," and then "Bissett" — a trying mystery to me was that — if the history was by Hume; but I found out later.

Dry old Hume! If I had not known him so long I should love him more. I had to begin on him at ten; and can I ever forget the dreariness of the "tonnage and poundage," and the wonder what it *could* mean, and why there was so much of it? Revenues to the crown, confiscations, prorogations of Parliament had some meaning that a child could vaguely grasp at, but that "tonnage and poundage" fairly conquered my faculties, swallowed up what little intelligence I had. It was my refreshment,

my spot of green in the desert, to read the page where the death of the king came in, and the names of his children were given (even they were often "issue," instead of sons and daughters), Constance, Agatha, Adela, Maud — how delicious! I luxuriated in, dreamed over, dwelt upon any kind of a passage dug out of the dreariness which seemed to bring anything personal, human, life-like before me. That a king should have a surname, that John should be called "Jackland," and Henry "Beauclerc" was a keen delight, and the first Richard was the world's hero for all time for the sake of that magic "Lion-hearted." And dare I say that in the general aridity, the strangling of the little princes, the drowning of Clarence in the butt of Malmsey, and the episodes connected with Henry's six wives were events to be turned to with eager interest instead of the proper horror!

It was after too much Hume that Prescott came to my relief. History could be made interesting it seemed; its personages were not like the dry bones of the valley; it was practicable to marshal them before one as men and women who had actu

ally lived. The work that told me this was his first: the *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* — a period of three important events, the discovery of America, the conquest of the Moors in Spain, the establishment of the Inquisition; and during their reign three celebrated personages in Spanish history were actors, Columbus, Cardinal Ximenes (the great statesman), and Gonsalvo de Cordova, “ the great Captain.”

But instead of dwelling upon the great historical works of this author, with which you surely ought to have already become acquainted, let us take a long look back and see why he wrote history, and how he did it. After that, if you have failed to read him, you will do so with keener interest from knowing the difficulties he had to conquer. And if haply you are familiar with those books, you will enjoy them the more.

William Hickling Prescott was born in Salem, Mass., May 4, 1796. You can see how naturally his imagination must have helped in his work, vivifying and brightening it, when you are told that as a boy he was exceedingly susceptible to all stories

of adventure and romance, and that books of that class were his favorites ; he had games where soldiers were the actors, and with one of his school-mates used to have fanciful personal combats as in the days of chivalry, the two having appropriated for their use portions of old armor from among the curiosities in the Boston Athenæum, and they took turns in telling each other interminable stories of their own invention, those of Prescott being the wildest and most incredible.

At fifteen he entered Harvard College, dreading the examination, but he did himself great credit, and on the following day wrote to his father that the President sent down a dish of pears to the candidates, and treated them like gentlemen, and that he felt twenty pounds lighter after it was over. He had not been long in college when the accident occurred which destroyed the sight of one eye forever, and before a year and a half had passed the other was so badly affected that he went to stay a while at the Azores for a remedy ; but growing worse, was shut in a totally dark room for six weeks, where he took his exercise by walking across the

floor, "hundreds of miles in all," he said, and amused himself by singing, always cheerful, always patient, as he continued to be through his whole life.

This walking, for the sake of both his physical and mental well-being, one hears a good deal about later; in his increasing blindness it became an absolute necessity, a part of his carefully regulated plan, to keep himself in condition for his work, and at one time he was in the habit of walking six miles a day; at his beloved country home in Pepperell there was a path worn in the sod which his feet had made, and one most pathetic incident is told of him when towards the close of his life he had a house at Lynn, and as there was hardly a tree on the place, he used to walk round and round in the shade of the broad branches of a cherry-tree, "a certain length of time every day, and there," says his biographer, "he soon wore a path in the green-sward, and so deep did it at last become, that now — four years since any foot has pressed it — the marks still remain, as a sad memorial of his infirmity."

After a visit to Europe he came home not much improved in eyesight, and was obliged to give up his early plans in consequence, but he deliberately chose as the occupation of his life, literary work ; and what do you think his memoranda for preparation was ? Though already an educated man, this was the preparatory course of study he marked out :

“ 1. Principles of grammar, correct writing, etc ;
2. Compendious history of North America ; 3. Fine prose-writers of English from Roger Ascham to the present day, principally with reference to their mode of writing — not including historians, except as far as requisite for an acquaintance with style.
4. Latin classics one hour a day.”

And “he studied as if he had been a schoolboy,” Blair’s Rhetoric, Murray’s Grammar, and “the prefatory matter of Johnson’s Dictionary for the grammatical portion of his task,” and then “took up the series of good English writers, studying enough of each to get an idea of his style and general characteristics,” and so for nearly one year occupied himself ; which I call your attention to in order to show you how he began with the elements,

and with what thoroughness he fitted himself for future work. A study of Prescott's painstaking, his systematic industry, and discipline of himself, is well worth the while of any young person, and is calculated to reprove certain flippant and superficial ideas about "getting an education" which are too common. In his own person he exalted the task-work of learning and made it heroic, while his simple earnestness and teachableness, like those of a child, throw a great charm around this phase of his life. Prescott the man, in his study, struggling with his life-long infirmity, calling himself to account for the least ill-use of his time and powers, always serene, master of himself — Prescott as the man is even greater than the historian.

After his year of English, he spent one in a serious study of French literature, and in the third he began Italian; next he became interested in Spanish, and says in a letter to Bancroft that he is "battling with it," but doubts if "there are many valuable things that the Key of Knowledge will unlock in that language," never dreaming of the career which that very language was to open

to him. Having eventually decided upon historical composition he deliberated long upon the subject, and made this note: "I subscribe to the history of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. January 19th, 1826;" and beneath, years after, he wrote. "A fortunate choice. May, 1847."

He made a list of several hundred volumes to be read or consulted; and with regard to his partial blindness, he writes: "What I can't read may be read to me. I will secure what I can of the foreign tongues, and leave the English to my secretary. When I can't get six, get four hours a day. . . I must confine myself to what exclusively and directly concerns it [my subject] . . . I must make memoranda accurate and brief of every book I read for this object."

He thought that "travelling at this lame gait," he might yet hope in five or six years to reach the goal;" but it took twice that time. Of one of his secretaries, he writes to a friend:

"My excellent reader and present scribe reads to me Spanish with a true Castilian accent two hours a day without understanding a word of it.

What do you think of this for the temperature of the dog-days? And which would you rather be, the reader or the *readee*?"

What a prodigious power of memory and mental assimilation that he could "digest while sitting alone in his study the material of four hours' reading which he had been listening to;" more wonderful still, that he could think over a mass of matter and compose in his memory, carrying along what would fill fifty or sixty pages of printed text, keeping it for several days, running it over and over, once going over in his mind a single chapter of one of his histories sixteen times, to be entirely satisfied with its composition!

For the first chapter of *Ferdinand and Isabella*, he was three months reading and taking notes. When you think of such preparation, supplemented by such mental labor, will you not read that history with reverence for the tireless spirit, the patient hand of the author? When it was completed he calculated that he had spent on it ten of the best years of his life, but it had been, he says, "a continual source of pleasure," with all its dis-

advantages, and this little record reads: "There is no happiness so great as that of a permanent and lively interest in some intellectual labor;" but he had the elements for enjoyment in himself, in his well-regulated spirit, his learning, his sunny temperament, his affability towards others. One of his friends said, "He could be happy in more ways, and more happy in any one of them, than any other person I have ever known."

As a specimen of his style, here is the description of the future queen, the patroness of Columbus, as she was at nineteen, the time of her marriage with her cousin Ferdinand—that event which united the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile:

Isabella was a year older than her lover. In stature she was somewhat above the middle size. Her complexion was fair; her hair of a bright chestnut color inclining to red; and her mild blue eye beamed with intelligence and sensibility. She was exceedingly beautiful: "the handsomest lady," said one of her household, "whom I ever beheld, and the most gracious in her manners." The portrait, still existing of her in the royal palace, is conspicuous for an open symmetry of features, indicative of the natural serenity of temper, and that beautiful harmony of intellectual and moral

qualities, which most distinguished her. She was dignified in her demeanor, and modest even to a degree of reserve. She spoke the Castilian language with more than usual elegance; and early imbibed a relish for letters, in which she was superior to Ferdinand, whose education in this particular seems to have been neglected.

This you will see is a highly elaborated, a carefully considered style; but in his next work, the *History of The Conquest of Mexico*, it becomes, as the critics of that day were not slow to notice, "richer, freer, more animated and graceful." This second work, which he began after a little rest, naturally came easier and was more speedily brought to a close, having been finished in about four years. He had by this time become accustomed to historical composition, had more confidence in himself, and was able to break away from any arbitrary restrictions which had almost unconsciously influenced him. He says of this period: "I wrote with much less fastidiousness and elaboration. Yet I rarely wrote without revolving the chapter half a dozen times in my mind. But I did not *podder* over particular phrases."

The *Conquest of Mexico* is a far more absorbing work ; the subject was a grand one, the situations were often highly romantic, as often tragic. What conditions for poem or story in some of the adventures, as of the young prince who saw his father beheaded while he himself was concealed in the branches of a tree overhead ! His vicissitudes and perils equal in interest those of Alfred of England, or Charles II., or the "Young Chevalier ;" for instance, one day while playing ball in the court-yard of his own palace, a party of soldiers came with orders to kill him on the spot ; the boy invited them into the palace, and while they were feasting, he passed into the next saloon through a passage, still keeping within their sight until his attendants by flinging spices and aromatics upon a burning censer in the ante-room raised such a cloud of incense as hid him from their view, and when it had passed off he was gone, having escaped by a secret passage which led to some subterranean apartment.

"And now," says Prescott, on February 3, 1844, "now I propose to break ground on 'Peru.' I

shall work the mine, however, at my leisure ;” but in 1847, it was ready for the public, that most fascinating of all his books (to young readers at least), the *History of the Conquest of Peru*. When I presume to speak thus for the younger among his admirers, it is from my own experience. Never had anything been to me so attractive. How suggestive of some grand looking-off place in the world of knowledge, as well as the natural world, was this passage about the mountain-chains of South America !

Arranged sometimes in a single line, though more frequently in two or three lines running parallel or obliquely to each other, they seem to the voyager on the ocean but one continuous chain ; while the huge volcanoes, which to the inhabitants of the table-land, look like solitary and independent masses, appear to him only like so many peaks of the vast and magnificent range. So immense is the scale on which Nature works in these regions that it is only when viewed from a great distance, that the spectator can, in any degree, comprehend the relation of the several parts to the stupendous whole.

It seemed as if the author himself entered with unusual zest upon the manners and customs, the

handiwork and character of the Peruvians; and intensely interesting are his accounts of their epicurean sense of luxury in ornament; the bridges of twisted osiers swaying to every motion where they spanned high in air, from cliff to cliff, the darkly rushing streams; the perfect government of the Incas; the systematic arrangement and regulation of everything throughout the vast empire; the post communication; the sisterhood of "The Virgins of the Sun" — it was all new, graphically told, enchaining the attention from first to last. But dark and red with carnage was the history after Francisco Pizarro set his foot in the peaceful land, horrible and sickening, but you will be swept along by it as by irresistible destiny till you see the last of the Incas strangled like a vile criminal and the Pizarros one by one laid in their bloody graves; and when all is done, lo! it is not fiction you have been spending your sympathy and your tears over, but history, as a master-hand can conjure it up and fix it on the printed page.

The last undertaking of Prescott was the *History of Philip the Second*. The Spanish subjects

still held their power over him ; see how he writes to Lady Lyeil : “ If I should go to heaven when I quit this dirty ball, I shall find many acquaintances there, and some of them very respectable, of the olden time. . . . Don't you think I should have a kindly greeting from good Isabella? . . . But there is one that I am sure will owe me a grudge, and that is the very man I have been making two big volumes upon. With all my good-nature I can't wash him even into the darkest French gray. He is black and all black.”

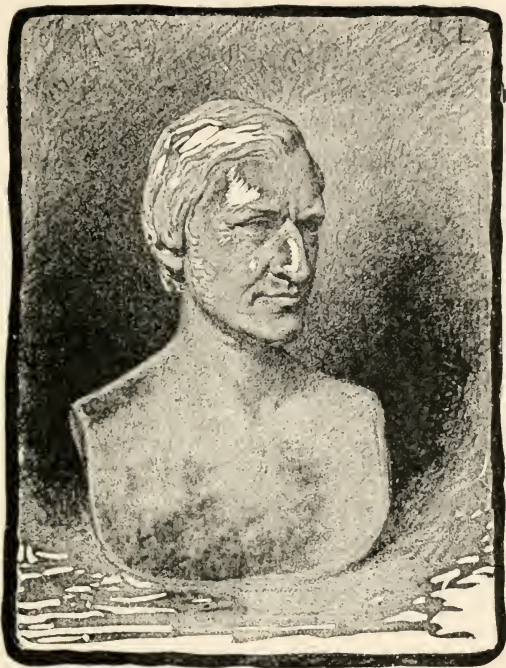
That work he never completed : on the twenty-eighth of January, 1859, he passed from this life. He had expressed a wish that before his burial, his dead body might be placed in the library where he had spent so many studious and happy hours, and there allowed to remain for a time ; and it was done.

Dead he lay among his books,

in the silent presence of the great host whose thoughts had been such joy and strength and inspiration to him ; “ in unmoved, inaccessible

peace; and the lettered dead of all ages and climes and countries collected there seemed to look down upon him in their earthly and passionless immortality, and claim that his name should hereafter be imperishably associated with theirs."

NOTE.—His principal works are *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*, *Conquest of Mexico*, *Conquest of Peru*, *History of Philip the Second*. His biography was written by George Ticknor. You will find that the paths of Irving, Prescott and Motley sometimes crossed one another. Irving at one time contemplated writing the History of the Conquest of Mexico, but graciously gave it up when he learned of Prescott's intention; and under similar circumstances Motley courteously gave up Philip the Second. The particulars of the former case are to be found in the life of Irving by his nephew; of the latter in Ticknor's biography of Prescott, chap. xx.



RALPH WALDO EMERSON. — *From the bust by Milmore.*

IV.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

I AM curious to know," you say, "how we young folks must go to work to become interested in the writings of Emerson."

But why "go to work" at all? You need not trouble yourself about his mysticism, or his theology, or try to know what "Transcendentalism" is, or seek to find out the deep meaning of some of his essays and poems. Let those matters go wholly, or till mature years and judgment qualify you for the investigation. Meanwhile, let Emerson speak to you for himself, in words you will find it easy enough to understand.

A sweeter, serener soul than his it were hard to find; he taught cheerfulness, courage, steadfastness; his books are full of golden keys to unlock difficulties; there are certain essays which it

would be worth your while to have always at hand so abounding are they in helps, such inspiration is in them. He has a power unsurpassed of crystallizing a thought; there it stands, finished and entire in one of his short sentences. Just a word about that style of his, which a certain critic said was made up of one short sentence and then another, and which Emerson himself said he "got by striking out," being acquired by a succession of the most careful winnowings till everything but the wheat, and good sound kernels at that, had blown away. You will observe as you become acquainted with his writings that he produced no one great work, no masterpiece standing by itself, but in general papers made up of detached thoughts which do not lose much by being taken away from their surroundings.

Emerson's favorite form of writing was, as you are aware, the essay; not of the picturesque, sketchy, half-narrative kind you are familiar with in Irving's *Sketch Book* and other volumes of his, but condensed, epigrammatic, crammed with thought.

His first series (published in 1841, and known as *Essays, First Series*) contains twelve, from which select for your reading, those on "History," "Friendship" and "Heroism." What an eye-opener you will find that first one! What enjoyment you will have in the grand thoughts of Emerson — thoughts so crystal-clear that it would be an affront to your understanding to presume upon interpreting them. You will feel your horizon widen, and that you, too, are helping to make history; that "what Plato has thought" you may think, and "what has befallen any man" you can understand.

Read the one on "Friendship" for the sake of the exalted place he gives to that relation, and to see how fine and pure, how noble and comforting it may become when his two chief elements go into its composition — truth and tenderness.

For his nicety in defining a quality, which he possessed in affluent measure, read "Heroism," and see in what that special virtue consists, and what it has stood for in all time.

He says :

There is somewhat in great actions, which does not allow us to go behind them. . . . Heroism is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual's character. . . . It speaks the truth, and it is just, generous, hospitable, temperate. . . . it is of an undaunted boldness, and of a fortitude not to be wearied out. . . . If we dilate in beholding the Greek energy, the Roman pride, it is that we are already domesticating the same sentiment. Let us find room for the great guest in our small house. . . . That country is the fairest, which is inhabited by the noblest minds. The pictures which fill the imagination in reading the actions of Pericles, Xenophon, Columbus, Bayard, Sidney, Hampden, teach us how needlessly mean our life is, that we, by the depth of our living, should deck it with more than regal or national splendor, and act on principles that should interest man and nature in the length of our days.

And finally, I must quote one line on heroism which deserves to stand by itself :

The day never shines in which this element may not work.

The next volume, entitled *Essays, Second Series* (published in 1844), has nine subjects. You should read "The Poet" to learn what his defini-

tion is of a poet, of genius, of imagination, and how poems came to be written. Read "Character" — pausing over that fifth paragraph, where he says :

The reason why we feel one man's presence, and do not feel another's, is as simple as gravity. Truth is the summit of being; justice is the application of it to affairs. All individuals stand in a scale, according to the purity of this element in them.

Read "Manners" (but it is not so fine as the essay on "Behavior," to which we come in the next volume, where you are told that a beautiful behavior "is the finest of the fine arts"); and read "Nature," for the sake of some delicious passages.

In 1860 appeared the third volume of this character, with the title, *Conduct of Life*, numbering nine essays, the best of which for you are "Power," "Wealth," "Culture," "Behavior," "Considerations by the Way," and "Beauty."

In "Power" are such thought-quickenings sentences as these :

There is always room for a man of force, and he makes room for many. . . . Concentration is the secret of strength. . . . in all management of human affairs. . . . In human action, against the spasm of energy, we offset the continuity of drill. . . . Practice is nine tenths.

Even to such an unlikely theme as "Wealth" he can bring his golden truths; thus:

Do your work, respecting the excellence of the work, and not its acceptableness. . . . Nothing is beneath you, if it is in the direction of your life.

On "Behavior," courtesy, manners, he can never say enough — away back in an earlier paper is this crystal:

The whole of heraldry and chivalry is in courtesy. A man of fine manners shall pronounce your name with all the ornament that titles of nobility could ever add.

And now it is:

Manners are the happy way of doing things. . . . No man can resist their influence. . . . There are certain manners which are learned in good society of that force,

that, if a person have them, he or she must be considered, and is everywhere welcome, though without beauty, wealth, or genius. . . . I have seen manners that make a similar impression with personal beauty; that give the light exhilaration, and refine us like that. . . . But they must be marked by fine perception, the acquaintance with real beauty. . . . Then they must be inspired by the good heart. *There is no beautifier of complexion, or form, or behavior, like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us.*

That sentence I could not resist having in italics. It deserves to be written with a diamond point. The man who wrote it had the most charming manner; his bearing was courtesy itself; his countenance was benignant, and so radiant with inward light that one of his biographers, Dr. Holmes, speaks of it as "luminous." None had a better right to put on paper these sentiments and rules of conduct, for he knew in his own life the meaning of sincerity, integrity, affability, heroism, courtesy, culture of all that was noble and sweet. He says in the next essay:

I wish that life should not be cheap, but sacred. . . .
Do not make life hard to any.

He said it was a social crime to discourage the young, and that "power dwells with cheerfulness, hope puts us in a working mood." If any morbid or disheartening line was ever written by Emerson, I have failed to find it. On the contrary, he constantly helps one upward towards the sunshine. They were morning thoughts that were his, which could front the auroral freshness of the new day. Sage and seer, mystic and philosopher though he was, he had an almost child-like artlessness of nature, with an immortal youthfulness and buoyancy about him. You would have found him most companionable if you could have had the delight of being with him in a ramble about Concord; unspoiled and unspoilable; loving beauty, seeing beauty everywhere, his imagination clothed even

the palpable and the familiar

With golden exhalations of the dawn.

You have his tenderness and child-like-ness, his simplicity and acceptance of an everyday truth in these lines in his exquisite poem to the Rhodora:

Rhodora! If the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the marsh and sky,
Dear, tell them that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But in my simple ignorance suppose
The self-same power that brought me there brought you.

For title of the fourth volume (published in 1870) he had *Society and Solitude*, containing twelve essays, the best of which for you are "Art," "Eloquence," "Domestic Life," "Books," and, if you have time for more, "Courage" and "Success."

That on "Domestic Life" gives you an insight into the home-side of Emerson. He was warmly attached to his own fireside and the happy circle around it, as you will see in some of his letters to Carlyle, where he says:

But at home I am rich, rich enough for ten brothers. My wife Lidian is an incarnation of Christianity — I call her Asia. . . . my mother, whitest, mildest, most conservative of ladies. . . . my boy a piece of love and sunshine, well worth my watching from morning till night.

Again, of his little girl, of the Ellen who was such a stay and comfort to him in his declining years :

The softest, gracefulest little maiden alive, creeping like a turtle with head erect all about the house. . . . The boy has two deep wells for eyes, into which I gladly peer when I am tired.

It was this loving and lovely boy of whom he had to write not long after that he had "ended his earthly life," and "A few weeks ago I accounted myself a very rich man, and now the poorest of all;" in lament for whom he poured out his heart in the poem called "Threnody," which is a father's fond, pathetic lingering over things and places made dear by the little one who had gone :

His daily haunts I well discern —
The poultry yard, the shed, the barr —
And every inch of garden ground
Paced by the blessed feet around,
From the roadside to the brook
Where into he loved to look.

Hop the meek birds where erst they ranged,
The wintry garden lies unchanged,
The brook into the stream runs on ;
But the deep-eyed boy is gone.

The last volume of essays (in 1876), is *Letters and Social Aims*, numbering eleven subjects. That on "Poetry and Imagination" covers a good deal of ground and is worth your careful study — first defining what common sense is, and then showing how all mankind delight in the poetic and imaginative, it touches your own experience and unspoken thoughts. You will enjoy meditating a little on his explanation of poetry as "the perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of the thing." In "Social Aims" you meet him again with a message on manners, cultivation, conversation, society. Here is a sample of his dainty way of putting things :

I think Hans Andersen's story of the cobweb cloth woven so fine that it was invisible — woven for the king's garment — must mean manners, which do really clothe a princely nature.

Read "Eloquence." Read "Resources," to be reminded "that this world belongs to the energetic, that there is always a way to everything desirable," that courage puts a new face on everything; and read "Greatness" that you may respect yourself more, seek the best things, and live for the highest good.

Thus the five volumes properly called "Essays," of which if you are to choose one for your own library (supposing you can have no more), and one at least you ought to have, let your choice be *Conduct of Life*—suggestive title!—but then, how suggestive he is! His imagination plays like sheet lightning, at unexpected moments, yet how much you see in a flash of it!

You will meet with many exaggerated statements in his writings, some things that have a ludicrous aspect, some hard knots, some seeming contradictions, with much that is erratic, quite out of the common line Emersonian. You will be stopped by thoughts which you cannot understand, and by others that you cannot accept. But even thus encumbered, the common-sense of Emerson

will be evident enough to you — and most admirable common sense he had. He was shrewd, wise and practical, as it will not have taken you till this time to find out. That was one side of him — the side with which you have to do. The other, the transcendental, you will, as I have intimated, do well to let alone. You would become bewildered, lose your balance, get no good from his meaning, even if you could find it. Even his best friends did not always feel at home with him when he had on his robes as a mystic and a “Panttheist.”

You are not to look on the above as the only books of his for your reading. By no means pass by *English Traits*, which is not a record of travel or description of places after the usual manner. He takes the measure of the English people; considers what England is — to see which country well, he says, needs a hundred years. For most excellent examples of condensation of thought, virile and graphic, read the chapters on “Land,” “Race,” “Ability,” “Manners,” “Truth,” “Character,” “Aristocracy,” and “Literature.”

Another volume which he evidently had keen

enjoyment in writing, for he was a hero-worshipper, is *Representative Men*, treating of certain leaders who were either great thinkers or men of deeds: namely, Plato, or the Philosopher; Swedenborg, or the Mystic; Montaigne, or the Skeptic; Shakespeare, or the Poet; Napoleon, or the Man of the World; Goethe, or the Writer. Lectures, addresses, miscellanies, poems swell the amount of his works to a long list, but those mentioned above furnish you with ample material for all the time you can now give to this author and for all that is profitable for you.

It is for his manhood as well as genius that Emerson deserves our reverent admiration; for his life and the thoughts he contributed to American literature belong together in no ordinary sense. He did not write one thing and live another; his nature was transparent; his heart was loyal to the truth whose zealous knight he was; therefore, because a pure, aspiring and sincere man was back of the words he uttered, those words have immortal life in them.

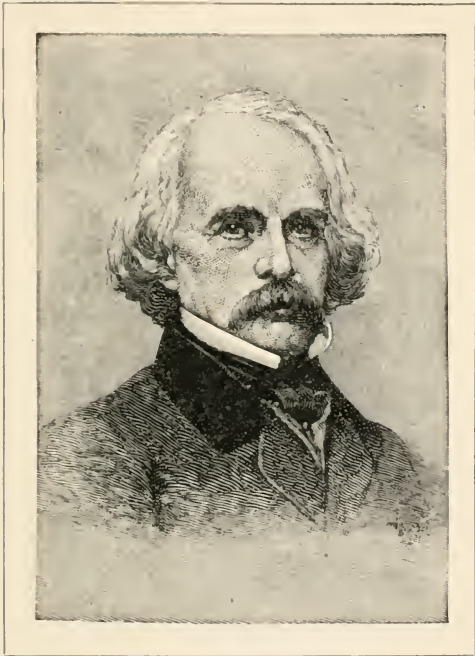
Nowhere was he more loved and honored than

by his neighbors, in the historic town of Concord which was his home for the greater part of his life. He was born in Boston, May 25, 1803, but went to Concord (the home of his forefathers), in 1834, and there he died on the 27th of April, 1882. His first dwelling-place was the old Manse so familiar from Hawthorne's sketches; afterwards he went to live in the square, white house on the Lexington road which everybody who has ever been to that old town must remember, with the pine trees about it, the front-yard and garden; an unpretentious house with plenty of windows and a sort of hospitable look, as if every passer was invited to walk down the flagstones and in at the open door. Sure of a welcome, it was said; and hospitality ought to have been graven on its lintels, for Emerson delighted to be host to the stranger, to his townfolk, to the little children and to the young people especially for whose pleasure he did so much, taking his reward in the sight of beaming faces; and now, when he is lying in beautiful Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, those village girls, whose aspirations he quickened, to whom he was helper

and friend, show their loving remembrance by keeping fresh flowers on his grave.

As you know, the Concord School of Philosophy devoted six or seven days to Emerson — an Emerson week — when such writers and thinkers as Mrs. Howe, Elizabeth Peabody, Doctor Bartol, Doctor W. T. Harris and others discussed him; for instance, as a poet, as an essayist, as an American, considering every aspect of the man, and paying tribute to his personal worth, his affability, and his high-mindedness.

NOTE.—The principal works of Emerson are *Essays (First Series)*, *Essays (Second Series)*, *Representative Men*, *Conduct of Life, Society and Solitude*, *Miscellanies*, besides various Lectures, Addresses, brief Biographies and other papers. *The Literary World* for May, 1880, has a bibliography and a list of writings on Emerson up to that time, and the same journal for July 15, 1882, has a concordance by W. S. Kennedy, furnishing a partial index to familiar passages in his poems. Of several biographies, that by George W. Cook has been commended as being “a careful and thorough analysis” of his teachings; that by Alfred H. Guernsey treats of him as philosopher and poet; Moncure D. Conway wrote of “Emerson at Home and Abroad;” Alexander Ireland’s is a “Biographical Sketch,” and the recent one by Oliver Wendell Holmes, in the “American Men of Letters” Series, is genial and discriminating, a running biography done by the hand of a warm friend, with dashes of criticism and comment, interspersed with bits out of Emerson’s writings.



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

V.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

WE come now to an author whose writings are of the finest quality known in our literature. Of Hawthorne it has been said that he had "a grace, a charm, a perfection of language which no other American writer ever possessed in the same degree," and that his English was "the most beautiful that ever was written."

The number of volumes he produced was small; compared with those of Cooper and of Irving how brief is the list! But all his work has a strong individuality—it has the Hawthorne stamp, sign-manual upon it; and the three novels *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun* hold a commanding place in the literature of fiction. The first named (and perhaps the others) will always be counted in with a se-

lected number of the best novels of modern times, with *Les Miserables* of Victor Hugo, *The Newcomes* of Thackeray, George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, *Romola*, and *Middlemarch*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, with that great work of Mrs. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Of Hawthorne's life you must already know the leading facts. He was born in Salem, Massachusetts, July 4th, 1804. The house was 21 Union street. I tell you this because if you should happen to be in that ancient, odd, delightful little city of witch memory, you may like to go there. You will find it in a narrow, prosaic street, and opening right on the sidewalk — perhaps when you are there you will call up in your imagination a little, shy, handsome boy with wonderfully brilliant, lustrous eyes who used sometimes to sit on the doorstep and look dreamily down towards the shipping seen in the distance. Back of it there used to be a garden where he said he “rolled on a grass-plot under an apple-tree, and picked abundant currants.”

This garden extended back to Herbert street, where at Number 10, is the Manning House, the old family mansion of his mother, in which he lived at various times; and it is especially interesting because there, in the "haunted chamber," which was "the antechamber of his fame," he says, after leaving college, "I sat myself down to consider what pursuit in life I was best fit for. . . . And year after year I kept on considering what I was fit for, and time and my destiny decided that I was to be the writer that I am." He had read "endlessly all sorts of good and good-for-nothing books," had made a special, artistic study of novels, and had scribbled sketches and stories, most of which he burned; a few of them, however, began to appear in magazines and in the "annuals" of those days, without his name, but attracting attention by the subtlety of imagination shown in them and by their fine literary workmanship; and in 1837, when he was nearly a middle-aged man, the first volume of *Twice Told Tales* was published. He had become known as a man of letters.

In that "tall, ugly, old, grayish" house (these are his adjectives), he lived in great seclusion, taking his walks at twilight, making few acquaintances, only coming out of his "owls' nest" at last when his book made him known and he was compelled into society; but in that quiet and solitude he seems to have been able to discipline his mind for the work before him. Those were years of preparation, whether he had a consciousness of it or not. The chamber in which he kept his vigils is pointed out — a low-posted room, with a beam in sight, a corner cupboard, one window looking off over distant tree-tops to Marblehead, and another down into the little back garden of the house where he was born.

If you go out for a stroll about Salem, you will inquire for the Town Pump; and for the House of the Seven Gables, where poor old Hepsibah set out the little store of toys in the shop window, and where Phœbe flitted about like a butterfly. And probably some of whom you inquire will say that it is that building, or that one, just as they told me about Skipper Ireson's down at Marble-

head; but that Hawthorne really had any one house in mind is not certain. Tradition says he had, and one in particular will be pointed out to you, and you will believe it, just as I wanted to, and would, and did. As for the Custom House — there it is, real and tangible, with the old, decaying Derby wharf stretching down in front. Somebody will show you where Hawthorne purported to discover the manuscript of *The Scarlet Letter*, and if you ask, you will be told where you must go to see the old red desk at which he wrote.

See Salem, by all means. It is the Salem of the Lady Arabella Johnson whom you all have known about from your childhood, of Endicott, of the witches. We have a romantic foolishness about some of the old world sea-towns, but this corner of New England is as rich in legendary lore as many beyond the ocean. And what an East Indian aroma it has, as of spices and drugs brought home in merchant vessels in the days when the willow ware and esthetic blue china that now are stored in the corner cupboards were in as common use as if no value were put upon

them! You know that Edmund Gorse when he was over here went down for a day and wandered about, and he wrote :

“I was deeply impressed with the strange sentiment of the place, and walked about the streets until I was thoroughly soaked with the old Puritan spirit.”

Those last words may be said to represent the state of Hawthorne's mind. The early traditions of New England took a mighty hold on him ; especially was he wrought upon by the grimness and severity of Puritan life and character, and from the incidents with which he was familiar he evolved, by the subtle processes of his marvellous genius, certain great moral lessons. Many of his short stories might under his hand have been elaborated into a novel of the length of *The Scarlet Letter*, if he had so willed. When you read that, and those legends of his, and *The House of the Seven Gables*, bear in mind the conscientious fidelity which he brought to his task, and his intimate knowledge of time and place and circumstance. Remember that Hawthorne in

prose, and Whittier in poetry, have done for Puritan New England, and for that particular corner of New England, what no other writer has ever done, and no coming writer can do. No more can Whittier's ballads and legendary verse be surpassed than can the two great novels of Hawthorne, in their imaginative quality, insight into motives, and tragic power.

As for Salem—Hawthorne is as inseparable from that old city as is the air that is over and around it. To the Salem life belong the *Twice Told Tales*, some of which, like "A Rill from the Town Pump," daguerreotype the very streets. *The Scarlet Letter* had its birth there, and there also belongs (though written at Lenox) *The House of the Seven Gables*, and there was written the lovely story which his children could almost repeat by heart, from hearing it read so often, "The Snow Image."

If you go to Concord, so rich in its associations with Emerson, Thoreau and the Alcotts, you come right upon Hawthorne again. There is the old Manse, to which he took his bride, the ex-

quisitely lovely, pensive Sophia Peabody; there the gifted, first child Una, darlingest little daughter, was born (you will find sweet stories about this pet "Onion" of his, in Julian Hawthorne's biography of his father and mother). That house is full of Hawthorne. Read in the preface to the *Mosses from an old Manse* and in some of the scraps of his "Note Books" how he lived there, and how he wrote, and where, and how happy he was. At Concord he found some of the material of *The Blithedale Romance*, based, as you know, upon the Brook Farm experiment of community of labor.

It was at Concord that some years later on he bought a house, The Wayside, next to Apple-Clump (which is the Alcott home), where he wrote the second *Wonder Book*, and later, after returning from Europe, *Our Old Home*. You are aware that he was seven years away from this country, a part of the time as consul at Liverpool, the remainder travelling on the continent and living in Italy, and that he came home to settle down to domestic comfort and literary work in this house

of his own, where he built what he had always longed for, a tower to write in. Failing in health he started on a little journey to the White Mountains, and died suddenly at Plymouth, New Hampshire, May 19, 1864, and was buried from The Wayside on the 23d, in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, just across the path from Thoreau.

You will see that one could hardly be in Salem or Concord without having him constantly in mind, so vitally is he associated with these two places.

Of all his books, the cheeriest, wholesomest, most delightful are the *Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*. He wrote the first in Lenox, Massachusetts, where he lived for a year or more in a very frugal way, in a little red house which the family called the Red Shanty, with a Tanglewood back of it. Those of you who know these two charming books ought to know, if you do not, that there was a real Tanglewood porch, and that Shadow Brook, Bold Summit, and the Hillside were real places all, and that the man who went nutting and skating and sliding down hill

with the children was none other than Hawthorne himself, and that he was the most sunshiny, genial, exuberant of companions, so that one of them said "there never was such a playmate in all the world"; anybody must be an enchanting story-teller who would talk like this before he begun a tale :

Sit down there every soul of you and be as still as so many mice. At the slightest interruption, whether from great naughty Primrose, little Dandelion, or any other, I shall bite the story short off between my teeth, and swallow the untold part.

Such delicious stories! They belong with the goodly list, by best authors, made for children's delectation, like *The Water Babies*, *At the Back of the North Wind*, and *The King of the Golden River*, books which have thrown older people into a "tumult of delight" and made them almost wish they were children again. Hunt up the originals of the *Wonder Book* stories as they stand in the old Greek fables, and read them along with his fascinating versions. "The Golden Touch" is the story of Midas; "The Paradise of Children"

is that of Pandora, and so on; but oh! what a golden touch was Hawthorne's. Notice his marvellous skill, and the beauty of his language as you read; see in "The Gorgon's Head" how Mercury is described when he meets Perseus in the solitary place! And what could be lovelier than all there is about Pegasus in "The Chimæra"?

When you read *The Marble Faun* you should look up every thing relating to the statues and architecture he describes, for example, about the "Faun of Praxiteles" which Donatello resembled. What a world will open to you! What winter evening's entertainment there will be! This romance was written while he was living in Italy, breathing its atmosphere, amidst pictures and statues and antiquities. There was romance in the daily surroundings of the Hawthorne family, who had a home in a castle so big that each one had three or four rooms, while more than twenty were left for their joint occupancy.

The fanciful story itself is only one feature; the art criticism, the fine "points" he makes about

old painting and sculpture have always given it a high place among works of that class — far more common now than when he wrote it — and taken all in all, it is a fine illustration of Hawthorne's vagaries and of his style. For a fine bit, dwell upon that description of Miriam's studio and the fountain in the court.

Everywhere in Hawthorne you find perfection of finish without loss of vigor; he is as fine as he is strong, and it was so with him almost from the first. When or how he acquired that gift of writing no biographer can satisfactorily tell, but he had the indefinable quality which we call genius. When you come, some day, to understand the nice distinction between that and talent, you will see why he takes rank with men of genius.

It has been stated again and again that his manuscript had scarcely any erasures or changes, and few or no italics. He had the skill of so choosing and so using his words that there was no need to emphasize — the thought expressed itself. There was some kind of a crystallizing process in his own mind that not many writers are capable

of. He meditated upon his subject, forged at it, hammered, wrought, finished it in his seclusion.

If you wish to see what he could do with very scanty material read "The old Apple Dealer." You will say that it is of no account. The man did nothing, was nobody, said nothing and nothing happened. His was a character whose peculiarity consisted in having nothing peculiar about it; all neutral tints, all negative qualities, passive; but in the hands of Hawthorne, the old apple dealer sitting in the shadow of the "Old South" is made the centre of a masterly piece of workmanship. I might call your attention to "The Ambitious Guest," "Fancy's Show-box," "The gentle Boy" (who was Hawthorne himself, according to his sister-in-law, Miss Elizabeth Peabody), and "The Village Uncle," where a little sweetheart of his is the figure which he sketches; here she is, the sweet Susan, taken from life:

You stood on the little bridge over the brook that runs across King's Beach into the sea. It was twilight; the waves rolling in, the wind sweeping by, the crimson clouds fading in the west, and the silver moon brightening above

the hill; and on the bridge were you, fluttering in the breeze like a sea-bird that might skim away at your pleasure. You seemed a daughter of the viewless wind, a creature of the ocean foam and the crimson light, whose merry life was spent in dancing on the crests of the billows, that threw up their spray to support your footsteps. As I drew nearer, I fancied you akin to the race of mermaids, and thought how pleasant it would be to dwell with you among the quiet coves, in the shadow of the cliffs, and to roam among secluded beaches of the purest sand, and when our northern shores grew bleak, to haunt the islands, green and lonely, far amid summer seas. And yet it gladdened me, after all this nonsense, to find you nothing but a pretty young girl, sadly perplexed with the rude behavior of the wind about your petticoats.

That is a sample of Hawthorne's style of writing at the very first, pure and limpid as water.

It is unnecessary to indicate which of his short papers you should select, for you will read them all. For a piece of work artistic in its completeness, and at the same time showing the fanciful turn of his mind, there is nothing that better represents him in small space than "David Swan" — you will perhaps need to read it several times to appreciate its quality. In the tales and sketches

you will find three classes, of which his "Fire Worship" furnishes one example; a second is illustrated by "Legends of the Province House," and the third is something of the fantasy kind which he liked to work out in a weird way, like "The Artist of the Beautiful" and "Drown's Wooden Image."

His novels have grewsome things in them. There never could be anything more terrible in its realism, more sickening in its minuteness, than the eighteenth chapter of *The House of the Seven Gables*, where the Judge is dead; but you should read it, full of horrors as it is, to see what the English language is capable of in a master's hand. Deeply tragic though some of the events are that Hawthorne treats of, you will perceive before you have gone far that he is dealing with great questions of right and wrong. Robert Collyer says that no works of fiction can be found "stronger in moral fibre" than his. He does not allow sin to be covered up, but there is an asserting of conscience, an inward retribution which awaits and overtakes the evil-doer. How vigi-

lantly his eye searched into motive, and what a probing power he had! It was not his habit to depict characters, as Mrs. Stowe does; but he had certain problems of destiny to work out, and he created human beings to be the object and subject, and when they were once in his hand there was no parleying with the wrong they had done. It has been said that the character of Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* is a page from the Book of Judgment.

Yet he could make some exquisite beings, and has given us two lovely types of maidenhood, in Phœbe and Hilda, both of whom are said to have traits of his wife. In *The House of the Seven Gables* you will see where the sweet little country girl comes in like a sunbeam, and how by a few dainty, dexterous touches she throws "a kindly and hospitable smile" over the cheerless chamber that Hepzibah had given her, and how she brightens the old house, and how pretty and housewifely her ways are. And let me remind you that Hawthorne used to call his wife "Phœbe," which shows what favorites the name and maiden were!

But it is in Hilda in *The Marble Faun* we see more likeness to the wife whose rare, pure face is to be seen in Julian Hawthorne's biography, before spoken of. If there was only space to quote all, instead of this fragment :

She was pretty at all times, in our native New England style, with her light brown ringlets, her delicately tinged but healthful check, her sensitive, intelligent, yet most feminine and kindly face. But every few moments this pretty and girlish face grew beautiful and striking, as some inward thought and feeling brightened, rose to the surface, and then, as it were, passed out again. . . . So that it really seemed as if Hilda were only visible by the sunshine of her soul.

Hawthorne's family life was in the sweetest, tenderest atmosphere, his marriage was an ideally happy one. He educated his children as far as possible at home, and was very careful of his little daughters. The pictures of his home are delightful. Towards the very close, at *The Wayside*, we have a glimpse of him reading all of Scott's novels to his wife and children, and Julian says :

“There was no conceivable entertainment which they would not have postponed in favor of this presentation of Scott through the medium of Hawthorne. I have never since ventured to open the *Waverley Novels*.”

This son when a child used to wonder why his father need write books. “He was a very good and satisfactory father without that.” Such was Hawthorne, the *man*.

NOTE.—Hawthorne’s most important books are (this is the order for you) *Grandfather’s Chair*, *The Wonder Book*, *Tanglewood Tales*, *The Snow Image*, *Twice Told Tales*, *Mosses from an old Manse*, *Our old Home*, *Note Books* (American, English, French and Italian), *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance*, *The Marble Faun*. There is *A Study of Hawthorne*, by his son-in-law, George P. Lathrop, a biography, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife*, by Julian Hawthorne, a biography by James Russell Lowell in the American Men of Letters Series; and one in the English Men of Letters Series.

That by Julian will give you most about Hawthorne as a man. There is also a useful *Analytical Index* to his works, in “Little Classic” form.



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

VI.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

YOU need no introduction to the lady whose name stands there, for even if you are unacquainted with other books of hers — which is not at all probable — you know *Uncle Tom's Cabin* better than you do your spelling-book, and you are on as good terms with “Topsy” as with your own black cat that you named for her. Not the slightest need of saying anything about a book so popular all over the world, and in more languages than I can enumerate; as Dr. Holmes read, at the garden-party in honor of Mrs. Stowe's seventieth birthday :

Briton and Frenchman, Swede and Dane,
Turk, Spaniard, Tartar of Ukraine,
Hidalgo, Cossack, Cadi,

High Dutchman and Low Dutchman, too,
 The Russian serf, the Polish Jew,
 Arab, Armenian and Mantchoo
 Would shout, " We know the lady! "

There are two other forms of her literary work, showing other phases of her genius, that you are now to have brought before you — her representations of New England life and character, as shown in such books as *Oldtown Folks*, and her everyday sort of wisdom, of which the *House and Home Papers* are example.

Mrs. Stowe is a genuine New Englander, with the deepest sense of Yankee humor, and the most thorough appreciation of the picturesqueness of old-fashioned life. If you wish to see one of her most characteristic chapters and a capital sample of her off-hand, ready way of writing, take the opening one of *The Minister's Wooing*. Notice the happy tact in getting started :

Mrs. Katy Scudder had invited Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jones, and Deacon Twitchel's wife to take tea with her on the afternoon of June second, A. D. 17 —

When one has a story to tell, one is always puzzled which

end of it to begin at. You have a whole corps of people to introduce that *you* know and your reader doesn't; and one thing so pre-supposes another, that whichever way you turn your patch-work, the figures still seem ill-arranged. The small item which I have given will do as well as any other to begin with, as it will certainly lead you to ask, "Pray, who was Mrs. Katy Scudder?"—and this will start me systematically on my story.

By the time you have read so far, you will feel sure that your author knows what she is about, and that she is going to act on a principle she once laid down for those who desire to become writers: "FIRST THINK WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, AND THEN SAY IT." Before you have turned the second leaf, you will have become aware of another thing—that that quick, bright brain of hers is peopled with New England characters, of whom Mrs. Katy Scudder is a representative as one possessing "faculty," which is a quality indigenous to that locality. Here follows a part of Mrs. Stowe's exposition of it:

Faculty is the greatest virtue, and shiftlessness the greatest vice of Yankee men and women. To her who has fac

ulty nothing shall be impossible. She shall scrub **floors**, wash, wring, bake, brew, and yet her hands shall be small and white; she shall have no perceptible income, yet be always handsomely dressed; she shall have not a servant in her house, — with a dairy to manage, hired men to feed, a boarder or two to care for, unheard-of pickling and preserving to do, — and yet you commonly see her every afternoon sitting at her shady parlor-window behind the lilacs, cool and easy, hemming muslin cap-strings, or reading the last new book. She who hath faculty is never in a hurry, never behind-hand.

In the same spirit here is Mrs. Katy's gospel, wherein she declares

Never say there isn't time for a thing that ought to be done. If a thing is *necessary*, why, life is long enough to find a place for it. That's my doctrine. When anybody tells me they can't *find time* for this or that, I don't think much of 'em.

In this admirable novel, which gives an insight into the theology of the day, portrays an old-style divine, and, in sharp contrast, the brilliant Aaron Burr, we have along the thread of the story the warmest, most inviting atmosphere of neighborly life, the quilting and gentle gossiping, the parties

in the parlor and cooking in the kitchen. It is to this book that we owe the big-hearted, black servant (slave indeed), Candace, "Queen of Ethiopia," who, when she had her freedom given her wanted them all to understand

"dat it's my will an' pleasure to go right on doin' my work jes' de same: an' missis, please, I'll allers put three eggs in de crullers now; an' I won't turn de wash-basin down in de sink, but hang it jam-up on de nail; an' I won't pick up chips in a milk-pan, if I'm in ever so big a hurry."

And to *The Minister's Wooing* we owe, too, the little, dapper, old-maid dressmaker, Miss Prissy Dimond, as nimble with her tongue as with her fingers, who had such professional pride in being able to get a wonderful dress out of a small pattern of silk; reaching the climax of skill in making over a gown spoiled by another of the craft, and not a scrap of the goods left to do with, so that she had to piece "one of the sleeves twenty-nine times, and yet nobody would ever have known that there was a joining in it."

The Pearl of Orr's Island, like the above, has one of the delicate heroines who represents the

ideal New England maiden, an apple-blossom of a girl, dainty as the sweet-brier rose, like the May-flower whose tints are on her cheek; another of the clergy, whom Mrs. Stowe delights to portray, for she knew his kind from her childhood; and two more of the typical, good old maids — we shall come upon the hard and cruel one in Miss Asphyxia in *Oldtown Folks* — aunt Ruey and her sister, aunt Roxy, who is introduced as presiding over the steeping of catnip tea in a snub-nosed tea-pot on the hearth, at the same time patting with a gentle tattoo on the back of a baby she was trotting on her knee. It is a pathetic story of the Maine coast, but brightened up by the “yarns” of the old sea-captain whose vivid imagination run away with him, and sprinkled with those bits of wisdom which remind us of the author’s English cotemporary, George Eliot; like aunt Roxy’s remark about the bringing up children:

“All children ain’t alike, Mis’ Kittridge. . . . This ’un ain’t like your Sally. A hen and a bumble-bee can’t be fetched up alike, fix it how you will.”

Or, in another story :

A satin vest and a nutmeg-grater are both perfectly harmless, and even worthy existences, but their close proximity on a jolting journey is not to be recommended.

It is in *Oldtown Folks* that we have some of her boldest strokes, masterly delineations of character. Sam Lawson goes into the picture-gallery of ne'er-do-wells in fiction to which Walter Scott furnished so many subjects. See what a favorite he is with her :

Work, thrift, and industry are such an incessant steam-power in Yankee life, that society would burn itself out with intense friction were there not interposed here and there the lubricating power of a decided do-nothing — a man who won't be hurried, and won't work, and will take his ease in his own way, in spite of the whole protest of his neighborhood to the contrary.

Sam Lawson and his fireside stories, the boys know, or ought to know. One wonders what Hawthorne would have done with such a personage, or with aunt Lois, or any of the inconsistent very faultily human beings Mrs. Stowe handles so

easily. There is this difference between the two authors : she took people as she found them, and made us see them, natural beings whom we recognize as such ; while he furnished individuals from his own brain to be used in carrying out certain purposes he had in mind.

If one were to select from her books the juiciest one, the one warmest with pulsing life-blood, richest in experience, lighted up with finest humor, at once homely and romantic, which but *Oldtown Folks* should it be ?

Oh ! that kitchen of the olden times, the old, clean, roomy New England kitchen !—who that has breakfasted, dined and supped in one has not cheery visions of its thrift, its warmth, its welcome ?

She seems to have revelled in that culinary region redolent of savory odors, and besides giving a rapturous but not over-done chapter to its praise in *The Minister's Wooing*, and reverted to it lovingly and lingeringly again and again in other stories, she has delectable, tempting chapters where she tells of the Oldtown days. For three that are incomparable in what they reveal

to us of a kind of life that will never be seen again, read VI., XXII. and XXVII., and bear in mind that there is a deal of family history therein. If you should read the biography of Lyman Beecher you would identify scenes, occurrences and individuals. Harriet Beecher as a child was one of a family where there were sometimes thirteen, besides visitors, so that the old carry-all was forever on the go: there were aunts and children, faithful domestics, brewings and bakings, great festival days of cooking election cake and Thanksgiving good things, roaring fires in the wide chimney and big woodpiles without. You must not fail to associate her with that warm, generous, genial family life; with the "Firelight Talks in my grandmother's kitchen," and the "Daily living in Oldtown."

Now come we to the practical papers. Commonsense is a great gift, and Mrs. Stowe possesses it. When we read her *House and Home Talks* and *The Chimney Corner*, which includes *Little Foxes*, we shall appreciate it, and wish the gift was a more universal one. Meanwhile, let us avail our-

selves of her practical way of seeing things and put it to personal use. If there was only space to quote liberally from the store-house which she, under the name of Christopher Crowfield wrote! — about dress, cooking, economy, home-making, housekeeping; wise, helpful words for everybody, the outcome of her own experience and keen way of looking on at the modes and manners of others; words which are of use for every-day living, for nobody knew better than she that it is our common life we need to make the most account of — company days can take care of themselves. The rambling papers with the above general titles cover the whole ground of which they treat, and family life, the home life of brothers and sisters and their elders, would be much sweeter, more delicate, refined, genial, and what home should be, if these things could be laid to heart.

Read what she says about “the economy of beauty,” and see how all things that a woman of a certain style touches, will “fall at once into harmony and proportion.” Read that admirable picture of a “New England saint,” who was her

own aunt Esther. Read that tempting description of her library, her chimney corner, around which the others had pitched their winter tents, while "Rover makes a hearth-rug of himself in winking satisfaction in front of my fire."

Of all the papers, perhaps the most helpful are the "Little Foxes," worthy of earnest heed, "by which," she says, "I mean those unsuspected, unwatched, insignificant, *little* causes that nibble away domestic happiness;" and she numbers "the pet foxes of good people" as seven: "Fault-finding, Intolerance, Reticence, Irritability, Exactness, Discourtesy, Self-will;" while fretfulness and grumbling come in as specific ones.

Here are some of her words:

How much more we might make of our family life, of our friendships, if every secret thought of love blossomed into a deed. . . . We can make ourselves say the kind things that rise in our hearts and tremble on our lips,—do the gentle and helpful deeds which we long to do and shrink back from; and little by little it will grow easier . . . till the hearts in the family circle, instead of being so many frozen islands, shall be full of warm airs and echoing bird-voices answering back and forth with a constant

melody of love. . . . I do not think that it makes family life more sincere, or any more honest, to have the members of a domestic circle feel a freedom to blurt out in each other's faces, without thought or care, all the disagreeable things that occur to them, as, for example, "How horridly you look this morning!" . . . "What makes you wear such a dreadfully unbecoming dress?" etc.

You will find a great deal in her writings of insistence upon the powers and gifts of even the most ordinary women and girls to make life cheerful, and praise of that "art of arts," appointing a household rightly and making the wheels run smoothly, which belongs to the "sisters of the most holy and blessed order of the fireside."

She also gives much advice about writing, and tells (in papers in "Hearth and Home") how she began at about ten or twelve years to try her hand at composition, how she helped her style by reading *Ivanhoe*, which she read through seven times within six months, till she knew most of it by heart. There were none but grown people's books in her family, but she says of herself—using the editorial "we:"

We read a few things a great many times over — read and thought and re-read, until the words and the sentences were fixed in our minds, . . . and in that slow way we were twenty years in learning to write — older than that before we ever thought of having a piece in print; and for years our first pieces were always given away; . . . and we found it pleasant to learn so, because we liked writing, even when we did not write well, and we loved study and reading and thinking for themselves, and without a dream of any use we might make of them or what other people might think of us.

That is the way the foremost woman-writer of America, with gifts “of the Walter Scott pattern,” began her literary work. It was in the parsonage at Litchfield, Connecticut, that the girl, Harriet Elizabeth Beecher, was born, June 14, 1811; the seventh child, so you may be sure she was in no danger of too much coddling and petting. Part of her education she obtained running wild on the long, breezy hill of Litchfield; and at home, though teachable and docile, she must have been, as Rose Terry Cook says, “a very little pickle” of a girl, for one of her mischievous acts was to beguile her brothers and sisters “to eat up a bag

of rare tulip-roots under the impression that they were onions and very nice."

They were wide-awake, bright, healthful, happy children in that family, in the whole numbering twelve, of whom eight became authors. She probably meant her own big and miscellaneous household where she says in *Oldtown Folks* "we were a sharp-cut and peculiar set in our house," and she surely means the comradeship of her childhood in the chapter where, "we begin to be grown-up people," and she speaks of the influences "all homely, innocent and pure."

At fifteen she was associated with her talented sister, Catherine, in a girls' seminary at Hartford, at twenty-one she became the wife of Professor Stowe, at forty-one she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (her first printed work of much importance), and almost at once took the place she now occupies in literature, for, however admirable some of her later books, that was the one that made her famous.

Her winter home, as you are aware, is in Mandarin, Florida; her other is in Hartford. In an

earlier number of *Harper's Monthly* it is briefly described — a slate-colored cottage, modestly fitted up, where, “a very quiet little lady, plainly attired,” the writer of that article found her, appearing “the wife, the mother, the grandmother, living in her domestic interests, rather than the woman distinguished in national history and literature.”

Long may it be before she passes on to join the great company of immortals on the other side!

NOTE. — A list of Mrs. Stowe's prose writings: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (which has been translated into nineteen different tongues), *Nina Gordon* (or *Dred*), *Agnes of Sorrento*, *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, *The Minister's Wooing*, *Oldtown Folks*, *Sam Lawson's Oldtown Fireside Stories*, *My Wife and I*, *We and our Neighbors*, *The Mayflower and other Sketches*, *Pogonuc People*, *House and Home Papers*, *The Chimney Corner*, *Little Foxes*, *Little Pussy Willow*, *A Dog's Mission*, *Queer little People*, *Palmetto Leaves* (Florida Sketches), *Men of our Times* (being brief biographies of eighteen persons whom she calls “specimen citizens,” to teach how a Christian republic trains her sons, and how out of our society grow such men as Lincoln, Grant, Greeley, Farragut and others).



ALICE CARY.



PHOEBE CARY.

VII.

ALICE AND PHŒBE CARY.

SEVERAL years ago — perhaps fifteen — Whittier published a sweet and tender poem, called “The Singer,” beginning :

Years since (but names to me before),
Two sisters sought at eve my door ;
Two song-birds wandering from their nest,
A gray old farm-house in the West.

Very likely you have it in your scrap-book, and may have wondered whom he meant. The two were Alice and Phœbe Cary, then on a sort of pilgrimage from their home in Ohio, to see face to face their literary friends in New York, and they kept on to Amesbury to pay the homage of admiring hearts to the Quaker poet who had written in kindly terms of their verse. That was in 1850;

Alice was then thirty, her sister twenty-six. Alice was the one whom he commemorated as the "singer" (though both were poets) in these lines, which were not written till twenty years after the visit, when he heard of her death.

There is to me something almost as pathetic about the early history of these girls as there is about that of the Brontë sisters, though the families were wholly unlike ; the Carys were loving and confiding, whereas the Brontës while having deep feelings, were held from manifestations of tenderness by a kind of unnatural repression that seemed hard, and at times almost cruel. In both households there were many deaths, and sorrowful fortunes ; in both, the children were excessively fond of out-of-door life, and of simple pleasures ; they dreamed dreams, and, shut in upon themselves, cherished aspirations which they shyly put into verse, and secretly sent forth into the world, of which they knew almost nothing, but which soon began to know them, and to wonder where these singing-birds were hidden away. Wonderful children in both cases, with heart-hunger and heart-break in their

portion, and wistful longings that could not be satisfied with all the literary success that came to them.

To know just what privations and bereavements Alice and Phœbe experienced, you must read the pathetic *Memorial*, written by their dear friend Mary Clemmer, who has just passed out of life herself, and her own biography now adds one more to the fast-increasing list on the rolls of the dead whose names we know and honor.

She tells how their father and mother began their married life in a new settlement in Ohio, on the very land where is the Clovernook of Alice's stories; there they spent eighteen years of hard toil, and nine children were born; Alice was the fourth, born on the place called Mount Healthy (near Cincinnati) April 26, 1820; Phœbe, the sixth, was born at Clovernook, September 24, 1824. Two darling sisters out of the band, Rhoda and Lucy, died in one year, and that was one cause of so much of the sadness in Alice Cary's writings. It was a loss and a wrench which she never could get over to the last day of her life. She was sensitive, and all such wounds cut deep, and never healed.

Neither could she ever wholly overcome the influence of the hardships of her early life ; for even, towards the close, when she had everything she wanted, she said :

The first fourteen years of my life it seemed as if there was actually nothing in existence but work. The whole family struggle was just for the right to live free from the curse of debt. My father worked early and late ; my mother's work was never done. The mother of nine children, with no other help than that of their little hands, I shall always feel that she was taxed beyond her strength and died before her time.

. . . Rhoda and I pined for beauty ; but there was no beauty about our homely house, but that which Nature gave us. We hungered and thirsted for knowledge ; but there were not a dozen books on our family shelf, not a library within our reach. There was little time to study, and had there been more, there was no chance to learn but in the district school-house down the road. I never went to any other — not much to that.

It is marvellous the use these two made of their lives under their depressing circumstances. After a step-mother came to direct the ways of the house, she grudged candles for them to read by when their day's work was done ; but the aspiring girls,

who, unknown to each other, had already begun to put on paper the songs that sung themselves in their hearts, substituted a saucer of lard with a rag in it, and by that light studied and wrote. Phœbe's first poem was published when she was only fourteen; and talking about it with a friend, not long before her death, and of her rapture when the newspaper came and her eyes beheld in print the verses she had written, she said: "O, if they could only look like that now, it would be better than money!" She said she laughed and she cried:

I did not care any more if I was poor, or my clothes plain. Somebody cared enough for my verses to print them, and I was happy. I looked with compassion on my schoolmates. You may know more than I do, I thought, but you can't write verses that are printed in a newspaper.

Alice's first appearance was when she was seventeen, and she wrote only poetry until 1847, when she began a series of prose articles in the *National Era*, signed "Patty Lee." In a few years she became well and widely known by her papers on rural life, which are now in books with the titles *Clover*

nook (three series) and *Pictures of Country Life*. There is but one fault to be found with them, and that is the under-tone of sadness, before referred to, and which pervades many of her poems; but that we can forget, in the fond and faithful portraiture of scenes and characters she had known so well. In "My Grandfather" are some of her best reminiscences, of the days when she was a child stringing a wreath of sweet-brier berries which she called coral; there is the walk to the old mill, along the turnpike, then into a grass-grown road:

A narrow lane bordered on each side by old and decaying cherry-trees led us to the house, ancient-fashioned, with high, steep gables, narrow windows, and low, heavy chimneys, of stone. In the rear was an old mill, with a plank sloping from the door-sill to the ground, by way of step, and a square, open window in the gable, through which, with ropes and pulleys the grain was drawn up. . . . In truth it was a lonesome sort of place, with dark lofts and curious binns, and ladders leading from place to place; and there were cats creeping stealthily along the beams in wait for mice and swallows, if as sometimes happened, the dry nest should be loosened from the rafter, and the whole tumble ruinously down.

The mill was a favorite theme with both sisters; Phœbe (who did not write much in prose) has delightful verses in the ballad of "Dovecote Mill," where she lets you see her heart, and tells you all her country love, and shows how dear was "the old mill rusty-red" with its moss-grown roof:

Through a loop-hole made in the gable high,
In and out like arrows fly
The slender swallows swift and shy.

And with bosoms purple, brown, and white,
Along the eaves in the shimmering light,
Sits a row of doves from morn till night.

And there is a great deal here, as in other poems, about the children, and where they played — real children, who seem to come out of the past and be living before you, as you read:

They watched the mice through the corn sacks steal,
The steady shower of the snowy meal,
And the water falling over the wheel.

Homely scenes, of simple, rustic life, told in unpretending measure — but to those of us who love country ways, how sweet they are!

One of Alice's most entertaining sketches is that of Mrs. Joseph Dale in her "goose-room." No such picture could be made now, for no such custom, after just that pattern, can exist. Mrs. Dale, adhering to the primitive way, was engaged in her yearly picking of seventeen geese, though she was rich and could afford to hire some one else to do it, and though she had no need of the feathers, for says the story :

Her down beds were stuffed already to hardness with feathers, but that mattered not. She would have thought as soon of dispensing with her extra fine blue and red woolen coverlids with which all the chamber closets were heaped and which were only taken down about the tenth of July to garnish the garden fence and to receive the benefit of sun and air, as with the seventeen geese and two or three ducks. But passing these peculiarities, herself and the man-servant and the maid-servant with the larger children more or less, had succeeded, after many crosses and drivings hither and thither, in lodging the gobblers in the vacant room of an out-building, denominated by common usage the goose-room.

And there, this notable housewife, with a white muslin close cap on, and clad in an old-fashioned gown "used by her mother before her for a similar

purpose," gave herself up to the stuffy, smothering work, emerging with a fringe of down on her eye-brows and around the edge of her hair.

You feel that all these things took place precisely as they are told; and that Mrs. Dale, and Mrs. Hill, and Mrs. Troost, and the Templetons, and the Wetherbees, the various uncles and aunts and deacons were her own old neighbors.

You know that the unfrequented road "traversed mostly by persons going to mill" actually existed. You see the horses in the door-yard, the turkeys, and that surly-looking little red cow with a white line down her back standing near a trough of water in the lane. Little "bits," like still-life pictures, are they. After all these years, and the sisters so long in their graves, you can see, through the words of Alice, what they saw — their own humble home, and other homes; the old-fashioned dressers with the polished platters, and blue or red crockery; the sanded floors, the floors scoured white with a strip of home-made carpet before the blue stone hearth of the fire-place, which was filled with green boughs in summer, and in winter glowed with a

blazing wood-fire ; you can see the very room with its desk and table and few, plain chairs where the grandmother sat in her bereavement, with the black ribbon tied over her cap.

You know about the farm-work, the chopping, the smoke-house, the sugar-camp. In that graceful ballad, spoken of above, the sugar-making is told deliciously :

Ah ! then there was life and fun enough,
In making the " spile " and setting the trough,
And all, till the time of stirring off.

They followed the sturdy hired man,
With his brawny arms and face of tan,
Who gathered the sap each day as it ran.

Both Alice and Phœbe delighted in these memories, half pensive though the atmosphere was through which they looked back. They could never say enough about the gray old homestead, the " old house with windows to the morn ; " and there are always fruit-trees, cherries, and

The old, familiar quince and apple-trees,
Chafing against the wall with every breeze,

and there are always old-fashioned flowers, lilies down the path, and "prince's feather at the garden gate," and

. . . the candytuft and the columbine
And lady-grass like a ribbon fine,

lilacs, and dearest of all to both, the sweet-brier.

Phœbe writes :

And the lilac flings her perfume wide,
And the sweet-brier up to the lattice tied,
Seems trying to push herself inside.

Alice writes :

I search and find the flower that used to grow
Close by the door-stone of the dear, old home.
.
We come to love our simple four-leaved rose,
As if she were a sister or a friend,
And if my eyes all flowers but one should lose,
Our wild sweet-brier would be the one to choose.

The love of the Clovernook days grew upon them, and some of the later poems, written in their city home, show how each was living them over, and it is noticeable what a similarity there is in their themes and also in their modes of treatment. In

her poem "The Sight of Days gone by," where she calls up the new furrows, the hedges, the barn, and the well

. . . that we used to think ran through
To the other side of the world,

Alice has :

I thought of the old barn set about
With its stacks of sweet, dry hay ;
Of the swallows flying in and out
Through the gables steep and gray.

While Phœbe in one of her poems has :

The barn with crowded mows of hay
And roof upheld by golden sheaves ;
Its rows of doves at close of day
Cooing together on the eaves.

Both wrote a great deal of poetry, and some of their best pieces are to be found in school-books, in collections and selections, re-appearing in newspapers from time to time, and always favorites. No danger but the memory of Alice and Phœbe Cary will be kept green, for poems from their hearts go straight to the deep places where love

and tenderness abide in other hearts. Phœbe had a more joyous temperament than Alice, and saw life through a more cheerful atmosphere, and in her home she was always brimming over with merriment and fun.

That they should have gone to New York city to live, and there have become such a centre of attraction that cultivated men and women, the choicest, should have delighted to gather about them, seems like romance. It was Alice, broken in health and poor, but brave and resolute, who started off to seek her fortune, believing that New York would prove a good place for literary work ; and in a short time she sent for Phœbe and a younger sister, Elmina, to join her ; and there they made a home, writing for whatever papers would pay them, living frugally, and keeping out of debt. After a few years they were able to buy a house, where the two elder sisters spent the remainder of their lives, and in which Alice and Elmina died. To know how prettily and with what taste they fitted it up, what troops of friends they drew to it, what gracious hostesses they were, and how beautiful were

the lives of the Cary sisters, you must read Mary Clemmer's book. Elmina died early; Alice on the twelfth of February, 1876; worn out with incessant writing during the many later years in which she did not give herself needed recreation in the country atmosphere she was born in, and which most probably would have given her help and healing.

Then, it appears that for Phœbe, who had always depended upon her, "the very impulse and power to live were gone. She sank and died, because she could not live on, in a world where her sister was not." Her death took place at Newport, Rhode Island, whither her friends had taken her, on July 31 of the same year.

One of the last things she had read to her, while lying sick, was "The Singer," to which she listened with closed eyes, and then said, "It was all I could wish or ask for."

NOTE.—Alice wrote *Clovernook Papers* (three series), *Pictures of Country Life*; three novels, *Hagar*, *Married not Mated*, and the *Bishop's Son*; several volumes of poems; and two collections for children, *Clovernook Children*, and *Snow Berries*. Phœbe had two volumes of poems, and aided in editing several books. The record of their lives is in the *Memorial* by Mary Clemmer, who also edited their last poems.



BAYARD TAYLOR.

VIII.

BAYARD TAYLOR.

IT was the unquenchable ambition of Bayard Taylor to be remembered as a poet. How intense was this longing, how steadfastly he labored to produce poems which should endure, how persistent was his determination to do worthy work in this line, is shown in scores of letters to his intimate friends. As he grew older, he put away from him the idea that he must depend at all on his volumes of travel, and constantly spoke of their popularity as something that could not last long, even becoming half disgusted at being called "the great American traveller." Only a few years before his death he wrote to a friend:

"The other day I looked into a volume of my travels published in 1859. Ye gods! what a flip-pant style! I assure you some things made me

wince, with a feeling almost like physical pain."

There was no occasion for depreciating himself in this way. You will look long before you find his superior as a writer of books of travel — I am half ready to say you will look in vain, take him all in all. He did not depend on guide-books or on a mass of knowledge acquired in preparation for sight-seeing and, consequently, his letters are remarkably free from the statistics, traditionary lore and historic matter which cumber most works of the kind — greatly to the vexation of soul of the reader.

He was an easy and natural writer, and did write well, notwithstanding his unmerciful criticisms of himself; he had the fair sense of proportion which is indispensable, gave variety, and did not dwell too long on any one topic.

More important than all, he was splendidly equipped by nature and temperament to be a traveller. He was strong and enduring, with ardor and buoyancy that nothing could overcome; he had great joy in out-of-door life, and had a craving that would not be put aside to go everywhere and

see everything. The spirit of adventure was born in him. Here is what he says of himself as a child :

In looking back to my childhood, I can recall . . . the intensest desire to climb upward . . . and take in a far wider sweep of vision ; . . . I remember as distinctly as if it were yesterday the first time this passion was gratified. Looking out of the garret window, on a bright May morning, I discovered a row of slats which had been nailed over the shingles for the convenience of the carpenters in roofing the house, and had not been removed. Here was at last a chance to reach the comb of the steep roof, and take my first look abroad into the world ! Not without some trepidation I ventured out, and was soon seated outside of the sharp ridge. Unknown forests, new fields and houses, appeared to my triumphant view. The prospect, though it did not extend more than four miles in any direction, was boundless. Away in the northwest, glimmering through the trees, was a white object, probably the front of a distant barn, but I shouted to the astonished servant girl who had just discovered me from the garden below, " I see the Falls of Niagara ! "

You will think of this incident and of the child Bayard in his Pennsylvania home, when you come to some passages in his books, where he stood upon

the high places of the world and took in the widest sweep of vision, in his own country, in Africa, in Asia, and in Northern Europe.

A genuine, healthy-natured boy he was, who went fishing by torchlight, gathered lobelia and sumach to provide himself with pocket money, did chores and foddered the cattle at night and then sat down to his beloved books — a few of them his own, bought with money he earned by picking nuts — reading everything he could lay his hands on, but delighting most in travels, which set his imagination wild, as his own have kindled many a boy since ; and he had presentiments “ amounting to positive belief ” that he should one day visit the cities of the Old World that he read of. So he made ideal journeys, and at about fifteen he learned French and Spanish, which came into use a few years later. He tells in one of his sketches how when he was in Spain (it was fourteen years afterwards) he could not speak the language, but after desperate efforts to recover it :

Like Mrs. Dombey with her pain, I felt as if there were Spanish words somewhere in the room, but I could not pos-

tively say that I had them. . . . I had taken a carriage for Valldemosa, after a long talk with the proprietor, a most agreeable fellow, when I suddenly stopped, and exclaimed to myself, "You are talking Spanish, did you know it?" It was even so; as much of the language as I ever knew was suddenly and unaccountably restored to me.

This is but a single instance of the remarkable way he had all his life of packing things away in his mind, which he was always sure of finding when he wanted them.

His memory was prodigious, and he would store up materials for future use on some poem he had planned and leave them till the right time came for them to be brought forth.

He taught school, wrote poetry, learned the printer's trade, and at nineteen began the realization of his early dreams by going to Europe, having a small sum of money advanced for letters he was to write home for publication. It was a wonderful thing to do, and so his countrymen thought, and when after two years he came back he found himself the hero of the hour. His first book of prose appeared in 1846 and had a great sale — *Views*

Afoot; or, Europe seen with Knapsack and Staff.

Three years later, when the discovery of gold in California created such an excitement he was sent out to write letters for the *New York Tribune*; and, notwithstanding so much has since been written concerning that period, you will probably nowhere else find so accurate a portraiture of the California of '49, and life in the gold diggings as his, taken freshly on the spot, when everything was novel, and a phase of crude, lawless, struggling, frantic life was seen such as will never be witnessed within our borders again. He was all aglow with his subject, and those letters are among the most spirited he ever wrote. He minded nothing about discomforts and hindrances; even over the dreadful journey across the Isthmus which was a terror to emigrants, he says, "I feel fresh enough to turn about and make the trip over again." The scenery of California, the mountain ranges, the deep valleys, the magnificent proportions of the scattered trees, delighted his eye and touched his poetic imagination; and numerous are the passages expressive of his enthusiasm, like this:

The broad oval valleys, shaded by magnificent oaks, and enclosed by the lofty mountains of the Coast Range, open beyond each other like a suite of palace chambers, each charming more than the last.

He spent five months in the midst of that rough, half-savage life, and says :

I lived almost entirely in the open air, sleeping on the ground, with my saddle for a pillow, and sharing the hardships of the gold-diggers, without taking part in their labors.

In a private letter, he writes in this rapturous way :

“ It is so delicious to fall asleep with the stars above you — to feel their rays, the last thing, glimmering in your hazy consciousness. . . . one night . . . I slept, or rather watched, all alone on the top of a mountain with vast plains glimmering in the moonlight below me, and the wolves howling far down the ravines. Was it not a glorious night ? ”

This record of travel was put into book form in 1850, under the leading title of *El Dorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire*.

His next long journey was to the East, whither he set his face in 1851; and there he went to what he called the "farther East," to India, where, characteristic of the child who wished to climb high and see off, he persisted, though he had scant time, in going to the highest point in the Himalayas which could be reached in the winter season; came home after two years' absence; and three books were the result: *A Journey to Central Africa*, 1854, *The Lands of the Saracens*, 1854, *A Visit to India, China and Japan*, 1855.

Just as before, he adapted himself to circumstances and climate. When on the Nile, he says:

Every day opens with a *jubilate*, and closes with a thanksgiving. If such a balm and blessing as this life has been to me, thus far, can be felt twice in one's existence, there must be another Nile somewhere in the world. . . . A portion of the old Egyptian repose seems to be infused in our natures, and lately when I saw my face in a mirror, I thought I saw in its features something of the patience and resignation of the Sphinx.

The Southern letters are rich in coloring and steeped in sunshine, but for spirit, freshness and

vigor they cannot compare with those from the North of Europe, where he went in 1856, publishing in the year following a volume called *Northern Travel: Summer and Winter Pictures of Sweden, Denmark and Lapland.*

I wish I could quote liberally from his account of the Thuringian Forest, and tell you how he and his friends went four miles deep into it and supped with the forester, how they piled on the logs "until the flames rose high and red and snapped in the frosty wind," and one of the forester's men "went into the wood for green fir-boughs, which crackled resinously and sent up clouds of brilliant sparks," and by the light of the flashing, sparkling, fragrant firwood they ate the royal meal of sausages and potatoes cooked over the coals there in the open air. It is like Robin Hood and his merry men in the greenwood.

He was determined to see the Polar day without a sun, and about the middle of January, he started from Stockholm, without having been able to find a man who had ever been up there in winter, or one who could tell him what to expect or

what to do. Nothing daunted he set out and was gone two months, during which he travelled "nearly twenty-two hundred miles, two hundred and fifty of them by reindeer, and nearly five hundred within the Arctic Circle." Away up at Kantokeino he had his heart's desire, and saw at half-past eleven a red light almost as if the sun was coming up, but a few minutes after high noon it began to fade, and he records that at last, once in his life, he had seen the day which had no sun.

He made such close acquaintance with the Aurora Borealis that he felt he was almost touched by the marvellous presence ; he says it changed

and fell in a broad luminous curtain straight downward through the air until its fringed hem swung apparently but a few yards over our heads. This phenomena was so unexpected and startling that for a moment I thought our faces would be touched by the skirts of this glorious auroral drapery. . . . Anything so strange, so capricious, so wonderful, so gloriously beautiful, I scarcely hope to see again.

That he was not much charmed by reindeer travel, you can judge :

Nothing can exceed the coolness with which your deer jumps off the track, slackens his tow-rope, turns around and looks you in the face, as much as to say "what are you going to do about it?" . . . This is particularly pleasant on the marshy table-lands of Lapland, where if he takes a notion to bolt with you, your pulkha bounces over the hard tussocks, sheers sideways down the sudden pitches, or swamps itself in beds of loose snow. Harness a frisky sturgeon to a "dug-out" in a rough sea, and you will have some idea of this method of travelling. While I acknowledge the Providential disposition of things which has given the reindeer to the Lapp, I cannot avoid thanking Heaven that I am not a Lapp, and that I shall never travel again with reindeer.

After seeing Lapps, Finns and Northlanders he was glad to get back to Germany; and after the polar twilight it rejoiced his eyes to see a blue sky and the sun riding high in the heavens, "like a strong, healthy sun again." As he left those Northern solitudes, he writes :

Not the table-land of Pamir in Thibet, the cradle of the Oxus and the Indus, but this lower Lapland terrace is entitled to the designation of the "Roof of the World." We were on the summit, creeping along the mountain rafters and looking southward over her shelving eaves. . . . Here

for once, we seemed to look down on the horizon, and I thought of Europe and the Tropics as lying below. Our journey north had been an ascent, but now the world's steep sloped downward before us into sunshine and warm air.

He was indeed a child of the sun. Many a passage like these might be selected from his letters or diaries :

I feel strongest and happiest when I am where the sun can blaze upon me. . . I am a worshipper of the sun. I took off my hat to him. . . and let him blaze away in my face for a quarter of an hour. . . The Parsees worship the sun, as the greatest visible manifestation of the Deity ; and I assure you I have felt very much inclined to do the same , when he and I were alone in the desert.

He was sensitive, "thin skinned," as he said, and once he wrote to a friend: "Don't you know that slow moaning and crying of the wind, as if something ached? When it sounds that way I can't work. I long for friends; I think of the blue Mediterranean; I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand—or something else to keep me from sympathizing with all out-of-doors."

But such moods were rare. He was one of the

most tireless of workers, never willing to stop to take rest, and he died in his prime, of over-work. His brain was always full of plans, which he carried along till the time came to give them shape, and he could have a novel and a long poem in hand, writing every day on both, "prose by daylight, and poetry by night! a new tandem, which I never drove before, but it goes smoothly and well." Whatever he undertook he attacked vigorously, and held to it, no matter what the hindrances, till it was done; and always there stayed by him the conviction that presently he should do something better; that with his enlarged experience and mental discipline he should do himself justice and reach that ideal which was always advancing as he went on, keeping a little way before him, but just near enough to allure and encourage.

It is with renewed reverence for the great, loyal, tender and sweet nature of Bayard Taylor that one reads such sentences as these:

The soul must sometimes sweat blood. Nothing great is achieved without the severest discipline of heart and mind; nothing is well done that is done easily.

My ruling passion as an author, is to do something better — to overcome, by hard work and honest study, the disadvantages of early sentimentality and shallowness.

Mere grace of phrase, surface brilliancy, simulated fire, cannot endure : we must build of hewn blocks from the everlasting quarries.

There is not space to do more than indicate the different kinds of work he engaged in ; he was editor, newspaper correspondent, lecturer, translator, writer of books of travel, poems, novels and dramas. His translation of Faust — an arduous undertaking — is pronounced a master-piece, the best in verse in the English language. He succeeded in more departments than any other man of letters in this country ; and no other ever labored so incessantly accomplishing so much in the same time. His first book (poetry) was published when he was nineteen, and he died at fifty-three ; in those intervening thirty-four years he had written no less than thirty-seven volumes.

I have directed your attention to his books of travel almost to the exclusion of the others, for reasons which you will understand, and because an

interest in such adventures is to be encouraged ; everything that enlarges the boundaries of your thought, while giving you a pure and healthful pleasure and an added zest to life, is worth knowing, is worth reading ; and, though I have told you nothing new, perhaps you may be stimulated to a study of the peculiarities and scenes of other countries.

I wish I could dwell upon his love of animals, his love of home, and speak at length of his stories. It was always a great pleasure to him when he struck a new vein, as when the idea of writing a novel came to him ; and he constructed the plot of *Hannah Thurston*, and set to work enthusiastically, following it up eventually by three others. He also wrote shorter stories, depicting the gentle kind of life in his own Quaker neighborhood, with sweet, modest Quaker maidens, like Asenath in "Friend Elis' Daughter." Again he hit upon a happy thought in his "Home Ballads" or Pastorals starting off with "The Quaker Widow," which he said popped into his head one day, and with which he was as much pleased as a child with a new toy.

His home feeling and local attachments were strong. Pennsylvania was the State of his birth, and had been the dwelling-place of his kin since the days of William Penn. He knew the men and women of his beloved Chester County and all their ways, so that those "Pastorals" are warm and mellow with human love and experiences.

Bayard Taylor was born at Kennett Square in that beautiful county, on January 11, 1825, and it was in that neighborhood more than thirty years later that he built his new home, Cedarcroft, the home of his dreams, just as he had long hoped to, just where his heart's desire was :

But when I build a house, I thought, I shall build it upon the ridge, with a high steeple from the top of which I can see far and wide.

And when at last he had it, he writes :

While I live, I trust I shall have my trees, my peaceful, idyllic landscape, my free country life at least half the year ; and while I possess so much, with the ties out of which all this has grown, I shall own one hundred thousand shares in the Bank of Contentment.

There he lived delightfully, most happily — the ideal life come true — for a time exercising magnificent hospitality, on a scale with his warm and generous nature, throwing wide his doors for guests who came at will, and it seemed as if the fairies who wait on the doers of good deeds had nothing but kindness in store for him. His rare qualities were appreciated by the friends who were drawn to him in no common degree, and who, while they loved him, admired the industry and patience by which he had accomplished so much — this self-educated, hard-working man who was abundantly entitled to all the praise he had won and the success he had achieved.

But reverses came, and with them the necessity of change, increased toil of brain and production of books that should bring in money; and a harassing, wearing anxiety beset him, though his fortitude and hope never failed. In 1878 he was sent as our minister to Germany — and *such* a send off! He was banqueted by his literary associates, his German fellow-citizens made addresses, sung songs, and their bands played, and they nearly went wild

over his appointment. No man ever went from his native land so cheered on and with such happy auguries as he.

Just as everything was beginning to brighten, and he was preparing to settle to his official duties and a literary task he anticipated great pleasure in, he died at Berlin, on October 19 of that same year.

The beautiful testimony of his friends was in newspapers all over the country, telling what a charm there was about him, how frank and sweet-tempered and generous he was, how true and honorable, how high his aims, what a delightful companion, how faithful in his attachment, how earnest in his work; and poets who had loved him put their sorrow into verse.

You will remember Longfellow's lines :

Traveller ! in what realms afar,
 In what planet, in what star,
 In what vast aerial space
 Shines the light upon thy face ?
 In what gardens of delight
 Rest thy weary feet to-night ?

And the questioning of Aldrich :

What unknown way is this that he has gone,

Our Bayard, in such silence and alone ?

What new, strange quest has tempted him once more

To leave us ?

NOTE. — He wrote *Views Afoot ; or Europe seen with Knapsack and Staff ; El Dorado ; or Adventures in the Path of Empire ; A Journey to Central Africa ; The Lands of the Saracens ; A Visit to India, China and Japan ; Northern Travel ; Summer and Winter Pictures of Sweden, Denmark and Lapland ; Travels in Greece and Russia ; At Home and Abroad ; Colorado, a Summer Trip ; Byways of Europe ; Travels in Arabia ; Egypt and Iceland* (all of which you should read in connection with the Biography and in Chronological order) ; a book for young people called *The Boys of other Countries* ; a collection of stories entitled *Beauty and the Beast ; and Tales of Home* ; also the four novels, *Hannah Thurston, John Godfrey's Fortunes, The Story of Kennett, Joseph and his Friend*. The list includes also many volumes of poetry, drama, translation and compilations. The biography which has for title *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor*, edited by Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, is in two volumes, and of great interest.



HENRY DAVID THOREAU.

IX.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU ; AND OTHER "OUT-OF-DOOR" WRITERS.

THIS name stands for an odd kind of man and original writer. Thoreau has always been looked upon as one of the unique characters among American men of letters. (With what a half satiric smile he would have received that term "men-of-letters" as applied to himself!) It is said by those who do not admire him that he prided himself on doing things in a different way from common people ; while on the other hand, to those who take pains to understand him, the evidence seems conclusive that he could no more have helped being what he was than a partridge, or a fox, or any other creature of the wood can help acting according to the instincts it was born with. No one was ever like him, and perhaps no one would care to be.

He has been over-rated, he has been disparaged. The matter that has been written about him, in the shape of criticisms, studies, biographies, is out of all porportion to his own writings all put together, which proves him to be a person worthy of consideration ; and there is not much doubt that he will have a permanent place in American literature.

Of the many authors who have made Concord, Massachusetts, so famous, Emerson, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, the Alcotts and others, he is the only one who was born there. To him Concord represented the whole universe, and was the only place worth living in. Like the man in Pollok's verse, he

. . . thought the visual line that girt him round,
The world's extreme.

That is, for all purposes needful for himself and his own culture ; and saving only the look out into the world beyond which he had in his college days at Harvard, and the trips he took to the Maine woods, Cape Cod, the West, and some

others, he had only, and wished only, Concord experiences. He thought he could find and learn everything there that was worth having or knowing; and by his insistency upon this point he gained a reputation for egotism and absurd exaggeration of the resources of that historic town.

The Thoreaus were of several mixed races, which circumstance has been given as a reason for peculiar combination of qualities in this eccentric author. His great-grandmother was French, his grandmother Scotch, his mother a New Englander, his grandfather a native of the Isle of Jersey. He inherited a certain kind of shrewd wisdom, independence and wit; he had a keen way of looking at life, with a fair amount of everyday sense, a poetic taste and a quality of reticence, self-command and satisfaction with self which give a distinctive character to all his writings. There were three other children, all talented; John, of whom he was very fond, Helen, and Sophia who died a few years since—the last of the Thoreau name in America with the exception of one elderly maiden aunt.

After his college days were over, at twenty, Henry found it impossible to give himself up to any special trade or profession, though eventually his tastes led him to become a surveyor — one of the best, so that Emerson, speaking of the wonderful fitness of his body and mind, says, “He could pace sixteen rods more accurately than another man could measure them with rod and chain,” and that he was held in the highest regard for his practical knowledge about lands and boundaries.

His first trip of interest was taken in company with his beloved brother; and he put his observations into a book (his first), *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, which had so poor a sale that he had most of the edition returned to him by the publishers; it was of this that he wrote in his diary the good-natured memoranda so often quoted, that he had a library of nine hundred volumes, “seven hundred of which I wrote myself.” In spite of its lack of success, it is an attractive book, and though there have been so many accounts of boating trips since, his nar-

rative is not out of date. He makes much of the starting, and of every slight adventure, according to his wont ; sees the hero in a very ordinary person, and great possibilities in the commonest life ; sees everything — nothing ever escapes his eyes — and he philosophizes and says things to set one thinking.

It was the same always, wherever he went. He was a student of Nature, of himself, and of a few choice authors. The pursuits and ambitions which engross most men he was more than indifferent to. Wealth, position, social influence were of no account to him. In his nature there was the Indian fondness for open-air life, and the sharp instincts and unerring sagacity of an Indian ; in knowledge of wood-craft few men in New England have surpassed him. He knew the ways and haunts, the times and seasons of the wild creatures in the woods and waters ; and to him they were never wild, but almost came at his bidding. One of his intimate friends says :

“ Sometimes I have gone with Thoreau and his young comrades for an expedition on the river.

. . . He would tell stories of the Indians who once dwelt thereabout, until the children almost looked to see a red man skulking with his arrow on the shore; and every plant or flower on the bank or in the water, and every fish, turtle, frog, lizard about us was transformed by the wand of his knowledge from the low form into which the spell of our ignorance had reduced it into a mystic beauty. One of his surprises was to thrust his hand softly into the water, and as softly raise up before our astonished eyes a large bright fish, which lay as contentedly in his hand as if they were old acquaintances. If the fish had also dropped a penny from its mouth, it could not have been a more miraculous proceeding to us."

He did not use a gun, and never captured animals except in gentle ways, and afterwards released them. Squirrels would run up his arm, and the partridge, shyest of birds, would lead her brood to the door of his cabin in the woods. You should read a fine paper on Thoreau, by Emerson, who was his warm friend, to see how this quality of attracting dumb animals was exer-

cised, as well as to see what estimate the poet-philosopher put upon his young townsman, the poet-naturalist. Much fuller, however, and more elaborate with regard to that trait in Thoreau's character is a volume with which you ought to be acquainted, called *Thoreau: His Life and Aims. A Study.* By H. A. Page, an Englishman.

Everybody who has ever heard of Thoreau at all knows at least one thing about him, and that is that he had a hermitage by Walden Pond. It was about two miles from his mother's door, on Emerson's land, and Alcott and Channing helped cut down the trees of which the little house was made — a tiny building with just room enough for his few pieces of furniture, and none to spare, for whenever he had occasion to sweep and tidy up, he used to set everything out of doors. His life there was a sort of experiment, but he delighted in the freedom from conventional ways and in the seclusion, or he would never have tried it for two years. Often Emerson or some other choice friend would go to visit him, and they had many an hour of lofty converse about his favorite

authors, Chaucer and Spenser, Homer and Virgil, Milton and Wordsworth.

It was a primitive way of living, but not exactly one's ideal to be followed for any length of time, however much one might be in love with Nature; he varied his gardening in his little patch of ground with surveying, and taking long tramps to see the sun set from some hilltop, to search into the habits of some wild creature, to find some favorite flower and be on the spot at its time of blooming — foolish excursions most persons would call them, but to this keen observer, this ardent lover of bird and blossom, nothing was trivial or common.

He was first of all a naturalist, and his life and work are of consequence as having given an impulse in that direction whose value and extent can hardly be over-rated; but he was also a fine writer, careful and discriminating in the use of language, and imparting to all he wrote a kind of quaintness and originality which fitly represent his own unique personality. From association with Emerson he had caught an Emersonian tone

which sometimes appears in a terse way of putting things, as in such passages as these :

The outward is only the outside of that which is within. Men are not concealed under habits, but are revealed by them ; they are their true clothes.

In the long run men hit only what they aim at.

Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all.

I shall not be as cheap to myself if I see that another values me.

What a man does, compared with what he is, is but a small part. . . . *One may well feel chagrined when he finds he can do nearly all he can conceive.*

Life is a battle in which you are to show your pluck, and woe be to the coward. . . . Men were born to succeed, not to fail.

That sentence in italics is for you to think about in earnest.

But in the main Thoreau is himself and no other. His prose is fragrant of the woods ; it carries you to the uplands and brings the air of the new dawn to your cheek ; you feel the morning in all your veins ; the invigorating atmosphere of the mountain tops is about you ; for the time

you are lifted up out of the pettiness of everyday living, and see how pure and sweet, how restful and helpful the sylvan influences and the skyey influences may be. You will, in time, grow to like the companionship of this writer, and while you pass over his oddities you will accept him as a guide through the woodlands and along the streams; and the more you observe, the more you will enjoy such bits of minute descriptions as you will find on almost every page, like the following about the peeping of his favorite hylodes in March :

I hear it now faintly from through and over the bare gray twigs and the sheeny needles of an oak and pine wood, and from over the russet fields beyond. . . . It is a singularly emphatic and ear-piercing proclamation of animal life, when, with a very few and slight exceptions, vegetation is yet dormant. . . . The shrill piping of the hylodes locates itself nowhere in particular. It seems to take its rise at an indefinite distance over wood and hill and pasture, from clefts and hollows in the March wind. It is not so much of the earth, earthy, as of the air, airy. It rises at once on the wind and is at home there and we are incapable of tracing it further back.

Or what he says about the red squirrel, which makes so many queer sounds, and so different from one another, that you would think they came from half a dozen creatures. . . . You might say that he successfully accomplished the difficult feat of singing and whistling at the same time.

The chief teaching to be had from his writings is that there is unbounded wealth of happiness and a liberal education in using one's eyes. He says :

The woman who sits in the house and *sees* is a match for a stirring captain. . . . We are as much as we see.

This belief he expresses more fully, and in pungent words, in his fine paper on "Autumnal Tints." Often there is a dash of humor about him, like this :

The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance a palace or temple on the earth, and at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a wood-shed with them.

Or he follows out a grotesque fancy, as in this case :

The age of the world is great enough for our imaginations, even according to the Mosaic account, without borrowing any years from the geologist. From Adam and Eve at one leap sheer down to the deluge, and then through the ancient monarchies, through Babylon and Thebes, Brahma and Abraham, to Greece and the Argonauts; whence we might start again, with Orpheus and the Trojan War, the Pyramids and the Olympic games, and Homer and Athens for our stages; and after a breathing space at the building of Rome, continue our journey down through Odin and Christ to — America. It is a wearisome while, and yet the lives of but sixty old women such as live under the hill, say of a century each, strung together, are sufficient to reach over the whole ground. Taking hold of hands they would span the interval from Eve to my own mother. A respectable tea-party merely — whose gossip would be Universal History. The fourth old woman from myself suckled Columbus — the ninth was nurse to the Norman Conqueror — the nineteenth was the Virgin Mary — the twenty-fourth the Cummæan Sibyl — the thirtieth was at the Trojan War and Helen her name — the thirty-eighth was Queen Semiramis — the sixtieth was Eve the mother of mankind. So much for the

Old woman that lives under the hill,
And if she's not gone she lives there still.

It will not take many great-granddaughters of hers to be in at the death of time.

But a few selections do not in any sense represent Thoreau. His books are all worth careful reading. No one has given a better account of Cape Cod than he, and if you should ever happen to be in that strange region of downs and wind-swept spaces at Truro, and where the Highland Light-house stands solitary above a lonely sea, you will find in his little volume the truest, most appreciative guide you could have. His *Walden* has become a kind of classic, and by that he is most widely known.

Thoreau does not seem to belong to our everyday world, but away back among sylvan folk of the days of fable, and that is how Hawthorne regarded him, for he says he drew his first conception of Donatello (in *The Marble Faun*), from him. But with all his eccentricity and egotism, there is one emulative thing to be said of him — he lived his own life, he was honest, without sham, and while clinging to his own ideas he did not consciously violate those of other men.

His last days were spent in careful revision of his writings; a friend who visited him says he

found him lying back in an easy chair, his mother standing behind him bathing his head, and Sophia on one side with a pile of manuscript which, measuring with his hand, he would now and then feebly make a suggestion about. His mother said, "Henry wished everything of a light character removed from his writings — he thinks life too serious for anything trifling." Death came to him in the Concord home he was so fond of, and his grave is in Sleepy Hollow, marked with a brown stone in which is a sunken panel with the inscription: "Henry D. Thoreau, born July 12, 1817; died May 6, 1862." The Walden hut is gone, but arrowy pines still shelter the place, the little clearing is open towards the lovely pond, and a cross set in the midst of a heap of stones marks the site where Thoreau lived — a pathetic cairn to which the chance passer-by, or visitor from afar, adds the tribute of a memorial stone.

Nothing in recent American literature has been more remarkable than the increase of writings on the class of subjects in which Thoreau was pioneer. One of the first (whom there is danger of

your overlooking, since new writers are crowding along so fast), was Wilson Flagg, who was born in Beverly, Massachusetts, November 5, 1805, and died in Cambridge, May 4, 1878. His first book, *Studies in the Field and Forest*, was published in 1857. He afterwards published *Woods and Byways of New England*, and *Birds and Seasons of New England*—three volumes with tempting titles, and contents which did not disappoint their promise. He made no claim to technical knowledge, but wrote because he loved the subjects; in his own words: “My book differs from learned works as a lover’s description of his lady’s hand would differ from Bell’s anatomical description of it.” One fancies him a small, slender man, taking long walks about the country, along the old roads and grassy cart-paths through the woods which he has pictured for us, sauntering rather than keeping on like your true pedestrian, lingering often to delight his eye in some scene of rural beauty, or to watch the movements of some bird and listen to its song, then going home to write in poetical prose his pleasant experiences.

So, one after another, the lovers of sylvan life have taken up the pen from pure delight in their favorite theme. Thirty years or more ago Colonel Higginson wrote those *Out of Door Papers*, which "H. H." thought were in the most perfect style the English language is capable of. But, in her modest unconsciousness of her own matchless gift of expression, she could not have foreseen what the readers who sorrow over her death are keenly mindful of — that for prose which should exceed in force and beauty that which she herself wrote, we should have far to seek. Read her *Bits of Travel* and her *Bits of Travel about Home* for some of the choicest paragraphs that can anywhere be found. Here, for instance, is the pasture we know as we know our own door-yard — so faithfully can the master-hand paint a typical "bit" of New England territory :

Considered as pastures, from an animal's point of view they must be disappointing ; stones for bread to a cruel extent they give. Considered as landscape, they have, to a trained eye, a charm and fascination which smooth, fulsome meadow levels cannot equal. There can be no more ex

quisite tones of color, no daintier mosaic, than one sees if he looks attentively on an August day at these fields of gray granite, lichen-painted boulders, lying in beds of light-green ferns bordered by pink and white spiræas, and lighted up by red lilies.

Could anything surpass that? From just such beds of fern have you not drawn forth long stems of luscious strawberries, and just such red lilies have you not borne away in sheaves?

Not a word of the descriptions of natural scenery, outward life, written by "H. H." can you afford to skip; not an essay or passage of the kind by Miss Jewett can you afford not to read. You will be interested in seeing how different the style of two or three writers on the same subject (yet sometimes how similar!) as in the case of Thoreau who wrote about the Maine woods, and Theodore Winthrop, who in a series called *Life in the Open Air*, wrote of the same region. You might compare also two passages about a mountain, or, for another topic, see how Winthrop treats a loon and its uncanny cry, see what Thoreau has to tell, and then what John Burroughs says about

the same thing — you will find it in “Touches of Nature,” in his *Birds and Poets*.

Of this last-named writer, now in the prime and fulness of his power, you surely know a great deal, for his essays are all about you, and appearing in the magazines of the day. What more attractive reading than his *Wake Robin, Winter Sunshine, Birds and Poets, Locusts and Wild Honey, Pepacton,* and *Fresh Fields?* A virile, crisp, breezy writer, whose pages lose nothing in picturesqueness when compared with any American author. The papers in those volumes are enough to kindle in you an ardent interest in the subject we have been dwelling upon, even if you had not the faintest inclination that way before.

It would require far wider limits than are allowed me here to speak of all the authors who have made this theme an attractive one in our literature. Lowell has charming papers among his few volumes of prose, such as “My Garden Acquaintance,” and others you will find no difficulty in selecting. Susan Fenimore Cooper (daughter of the great novelist) wrote more than thirty

years ago a record of the sylvan year, which she called *Rural Hours*. Celia Thaxter described in her *Among the Isles of Shoals* all the phases of flower life, and the wild characteristics of those bleak but most fascinating islands off the New Hampshire coast — a book which it is a joy to read, autobiographic, descriptive, brimming over with poetic thought.

Such a library of out-of-door literature by our own countrymen and countrywomen, and about different sections of our own country, as one might have! A summer corner, where we should seem transported to the cool, green solitudes of woods far inland, to glens among the mountains, to beaches lapped by ocean waves. The tonic of the hills and the sea is in them, the invigorating freshness of the west winds, the song of birds, the sound of waters, the incense of flowers. You would find in that nook some choice papers by Joel Benton, which he meant to put into a book to be called *Under the Apple Boughs* (perhaps he has done so); a volume or more by Maurice Thompson, *By-ways and Bird Notes*, for one; you

will find the classic pastorals (for such they must be termed, incongruous though it sound), of Edith Thomas; the Adirondack sketches of Charles Dudley Warner; certain volumes by Ik Marvel (of which more by and by). How long the list might be made, not forgetting one lately published, *Tenants of an old Farm*, by Dr. McCook, with its comical adaptations by Dan Beard; and, also new, *A Naturalist's Rambles about Home*, and *Upland and Meadow*, both about that famous region for naturalists, the New Jersey creeks and barrens, both by Dr. Charles C. Abbott. Finally our magazines and our book stores abound with this class of literature, so that there is an embarrassment of riches, from North, East, South and West, all in the same general line with Thoreau, but treated in as many ways as there are authors.

NOTE. — Thoreau's prose books are *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, *A Yankee in Canada*, *Excursions in Field and Forest*, *The Maine Woods*, *Cape Cod*, *Early Spring in Massachusetts*, and *Summer*. The two last named are selections from his journals, edited by H. G. O. Blake. Two of the most attractive among his single papers, are "Autumnal Tints" and "Wild Apples." There is a biography by Wm. E. Channing, a "Life" by F. B. Sanborn, and "A Study" of his life and aims, by H. A. Page.



FRANCIS PARKMAN

X

FRANCIS PARKMAN.

IN reading history, the intelligent and profitable way is to have some plan, and then follow it out. Select a certain period, and make yourself as thoroughly acquainted as possible with that; and for collateral reading, take biographies or other books bearing upon the times, individuals, leading events, or the country you are engaged upon; by doing which you may have the benefit of some side-lights upon your subject, and also the opinion of writers from some other point-of-view, helping you to form your own opinion. It is often the case that one reads history in a kind of hap-hazard way, now a little about England, now the Middle Ages, now Greece or Rome. The result is an accumulation of incidents and dates; of a kind of information which is not knowledge. You have a confused

mass in your mind which you cannot use, a chaos, a miscellany; even after much reading and study you are in deplorable uncertainty about the momentous causes which have brought about the very revolutions in government, dethronement of sovereigns, overthrow of nations which you have just given your time to. It is a lamentable failure to appreciate the chief aim for which history is written.

Already you have had Prescott brought before you with his subjects of discovery, adventures and conquest. Another series is the splendid group which the genius of Motley made as captivating as romance, covering a period of portentous import to more than one of the great European powers. Coming to our own United States, you have the general history by Hildreth, and that upon which the venerable and venerated George Bancroft has been fifty years engaged; besides the many local and topical works to aid in a clear knowledge of certain regions or subjects, such as Palfrey's *History of New England*, and Frothingham's *Siege of Boston*. These men are our own his

torians, American authors, eminent for scholarship, for painstaking research.

There is another who stands without a superior, second to no American historian living or dead; second to no historian who has written in the English tongue — Francis Parkman.

As early as the age of eighteen he formed the purpose of writing on "French-American history," limiting himself to the contest which ended with the death of Montcalm and Wolfe, the fall of Quebec and of the French dominion in North America. But afterwards he extended his plan so as to include the entire subject of French colonization; and in carrying it out he arranged it in separate narratives with different titles.

To-day, after forty-five years, it stands complete, with the exception of a comparatively unimportant portion of seven years, by and by to come into place; and in his own words, "When this gap is filled, the series of 'France and England in North America' will form a continuous history of the French occupation of the continent." A series unsurpassed for brilliancy, for the quality of the

literary workmanship, accuracy, scholarship and picturesque narrative. You can hardly know what a charm history may have until you have made yourself acquainted with these volumes; in his hands it is like a story-book.

His first movement in preparation was a trip to the Rocky Mountains for the purpose of studying savage life, customs and character among the wildest tribes. With a friend, like himself just out of college, he set out from St. Louis in the April of 1846 and, after various adventures, left him and went on with a hunter-guide and lived among the Sioux; sleeping in their wigwams, eating their detestable food, sharing all their hardships and roving life, following the hunt and the war-path, witnessing their ceremonies; in short he was domesticated for several weeks with a horde of the most thorough savages; as utterly lost to civilization as if no such thing existed, and sometimes so ill that he expected to leave his bones there in Oregon. No white man, unless it might have been a fur trader, could have had better opportunity. His nerve and determination never failed; he says he

placed himself in positions so perilous because "my business was observation, and I was willing to pay dearly for the opportunity of exercising it."

After his return his experiences were put into a book, *The Oregon Trail*, brim full of novel situations, perils and escapes, buffalo-hunts in the region of the Black Hills, and all the hideous details of that savage kind of living. You will see just what Indians were at the Far West forty years ago. No such account could be written to-day, for that state of things has passed away forever. He went boldly to the lodge of an old chief, and had the guide announce that he had come to live with him; and as hospitality under such circumstances is an Indian virtue he became one of the family of Kongra Tonga. Here is a passage after the big buffalo hunt was over:

I entered the lodge of my host. His squaw instantly brought me food and water, and spread a buffalo-robe for me to lie upon; and being much fatigued I lay down and fell asleep. In about an hour, the entrance of Kongra Tonga, with his arms smeared with blood to the elbows, awoke me. . . . His squaw gave him a vessel of water for washing, set before him a bowl of boiled meat, and, as he was

eating, pulled off his bloody moccasins and placed fresh ones on his feet. . . . And now the hunters, two or three at a time, came rapidly in and, each consigning his horses to the squaws, entered his lodge with the air of a man whose day's work was done. The squaws flung down the load from the burdened horses, and vast piles of meat and hides were soon gathered before the door of every lodge. By this time it was darkening fast, and the whole village was illumined by the glare of fires. All the squaws and children were gathered about the piles of meat, exploring them for the daintiest portion.

An intimate, most trying, often sickening inside view of savage life and character which was afterward of incalculable service to him. Thus, in the outset, you must understand that your historian is personally familiar with his ground; that besides collecting material from foreign archives, from French manuscripts, documents and letters hitherto inaccessible, from every possible quarter, he has journeyed through forests, been up and down the great rivers, along the lakes, visited the fields where battles were fought, examined the ruins of forts and old defences, taken note of the scenery and vegetable growths, and traversed what were once trails through the wilderness. He says:

I have visited and examined every spot where events of any importance in connection with the contest took place, and have observed with attention such scenes and persons as might help to illustrate those I meant to describe. In short, the subject has been studied as much from life and in the open air as at the library table.

And now let me emphasize the importance of this magnificent work by reminding you that while so much interest is connected with the War of the Revolution and the late War of the Rebellion, there was danger that the momentous consequences involved in that earlier, great struggle between the French and English might be almost lost sight of.

The general title is "France and England in North America. A series of historical narratives." The time covered is from 1512 (the discovery of Florida) to the fall of Canada, in 1760, with a supplementary chapter or two relative to the treaty and results. The scenes, personages, accessories and events during this period of about two hundred and fifty years are wonderfully varied and dramatic. The chief actors are French noblemen fresh from the most polished court in Europe, officers victorious in famous European campaigns,

explorers, Jesuit fathers, trappers, guides, half-breeds, Indian warriors, and in the ancient régime, nuns, high-born ladies and peasant girls. The region is romantic, taking in the coast at Mount Desert, and that wild stretch along the St. Lawrence and the chain of great lakes to the far Northwest, the Mississippi river and the fateful lagoons at its mouth.

It has the Acadia of the people of Evangeline, Quebec with its heights and historic "Plain," Montreal and the convent whose walls were reared during the reign of that régime, Lake George, Champlain, Ticonderoga, the forts where diabolic savages wreaked their vengeance, trading-posts, lonely missions in the wilderness. The scenes shift, and succeed one another like those in some long panorama; now a pageant or a religious ceremonial, now an ambushade or a war-dance. Dramatic in the highest degree, it was life lived rapidly and insecurely, alternating from festivity to carnage; a time of splendid success and one of downfall, of glory, of triumph and of dire misfortune. Nowhere else on this continent have been such varied and stirring events.

Part I. is *Pioneers of France in the New World*, and the author introduces it by saying :

The springs of American civilization, unlike those of the older world, lie revealed in the clear light of History.

He says it was Feudalism, Monarchy and Rome — “a gigantic ambition striving to master a continent” — which sent those foreign expeditions to our shore, and that “the story of New France opens with a tragedy, in the wilds of Florida.” The first division of Part I. is “Huguenots in Florida,” and while reading it it is worth while to take up the chapters in the first volume of Bancroft’s *History of the United States* which treat of the same subject, and also to give careful attention to a recent volume by Charles B. Reynolds, entitled *Old Saint Augustine*. The second division is “Samuel de Champlain,” a far more agreeable topic, and a kind of adventurer more worthy than many who appear in those pages. Here is an account of an Ottawa village as his exploring party saw it; they were the first white men the Indians had seen :

Here was a rough clearing. The trees had been burned; there was a rude and desolate gap in the sombre green of

the pine forest. Dead trunks, blasted and black with fire, stood grimly upright amid the charred stumps and prostrate bodies of fallen comrades half consumed. In the intervening spaces the soil had been feebly scratched with hoes of wood or bone, and a crop of maize was growing, now some four inches high. The dwellings of these slovenly farmers, framed of poles covered with sheets of bark, were scattered here and there, singly or in groups, while their tenants were running to the shore in amazement. Warriors stood with their hands over their mouths — the usual attitude of astonishment; squaws stared between curiosity and fear; and naked papposes screamed and ran.

This was the first intrusion upon wigwams in the “forest primeval,” and here the red man as he was, the aboriginal inhabitant, the North American Indian who was to play so important a part in coming events.

Part II. is *The Jesuits in North America*, and is a history of the efforts, perseverance, zeal and hardships of the priests in establishing Missions among the Indians. No annals afford a picture of more sublime patience and self-sacrifice than the lives of those men, who were more than ready to shut themselves off in the heart of the wilderness, to be massacred, burnt at the stake, by their savage as-

sociates, and perish there alone, as was the fate of many.

But their religious enthusiasm had results commensurate with their heroism, and its influence was of weight in founding Montreal and determining the site of towns which perpetuate their names to this day.

Part III., *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, you will find one of the most captivating of the series. A biography of one of the most daring of all the explorers in an age of daring men; one whom no perils could daunt, a man of unconquerable mind "in a frame of iron"—that educated young French gentleman who came over to Canada at twenty-two to seek his fortune, learned seven or eight Indian languages and dialects, and with his imagination on fire to find a new passage to the South Sea by way of the Ohio and Mississippi, lent his life to "exploring the mystery of the great unknown river of the West." Of the perils and tragic experiences through the years that followed, through wintry forests, beset by savage hordes, we have his own words :

Often without food ; watch by night and march by day, loaded with baggage, such as blanket, clothing, kettle, hatchet, gun, powder, lead, and skins to make moccasins ; sometimes pushing through thickets, sometimes climbing rocks covered with snow, sometimes wading whole days through marshes where the water was waist-deep or even more, at a season when the snow was not entirely melted.

Again, when snow kept on falling for nineteen days in succession, he says :

We were obliged to cross forty leagues of open country, where we could hardly find wood to warm ourselves at evening, and could get no bark whatever to make a hut, so that we had to spend the night exposed to the furious winds that blow over those plains.

Through regions where there had been Indian fights, and sights most sickening after that " hyena warfare " met their sight ; losing vessels and boats ; encountering the murderous savages ; amidst plunderers and mutineers ; subject to every hindrance conceivable — to understand all this, you must read this strangely fascinating but saddening volume which closes with loss and disappointment, with tragedy, and the assassination of the brave leader at forty-four.

Part IV., *The Old Régime in Canada*, is a more peaceful division treating of the mode of life in Montreal and other settlements, the arrival of the emigrant girls from France, the establishment of the Sisterhoods still existing in that quaint Canadian city, building, mission work, intrigues, dissensions, the rude conditions of a new colony with a promiscuous population.

Part V., *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV.*, gives the history of "the most remarkable man who ever represented the crown of France in the New World," and the beginning of the troubles between the French and the English colonies which grew into that long and bloody contest, during which bands of Indian allies swept down through the wilderness upon our defenceless settlements, and along our northern frontiers there was an unbroken reign of terror. It is in this part (Chapter XVI.) that you come upon the Acadians of whom you are to know more by and by.

As was said in the beginning, there is a vacancy in the series, which leaves us to pass on to the grand culmination in Part VII., *Montcalm and*

Wolfe, one of the finest pieces of historical writing in our language. In this the author has surpassed all the preceding volumes. In the Introduction he says :

The most momentous and far-reaching question ever brought to issue on this continent was : Shall France remain here, or shall she not ?

This work tells why and how French dominion was overthrown ; and first, with clearness of statement that a child could understand, shows the situation, what France claimed, and what she actually held ; then the position and conditions of the thirteen British colonies at the period dating 1745 ; then the struggles between the French and English for trading-posts : and here at one of the French forts commanded by Saint Pierre, we meet, in the autumn of 1753, George Washington :

The surrounding forests had dropped their leaves, and in gray and patient desolation bided the coming winter. Chill rains drizzled over the gloomy "clearing," and drenched the palisades and log-built barracks, raw from the axe. Buried in the wilderness, the military exiles resigned themselves as they might to months of monotonous solitude, when, just after sunset on the eleventh of December, a tall youth came

out of the forest on horseback, attended by a companion much older and rougher than himself, and followed by several Indians and four or five white men with pack horses. Officers from the fort went out to meet the strangers; and wading through mud and sodden snow, they entered at the gate. On the next day the young leader of the party, with the help of an interpreter, for he spoke no French, had an interview with the commandant, and gave him a letter from Governor Dinwiddie. Saint Pierre and the officer next in rank, who knew a little English, took it to another room, to study it at their ease; and in it, all unconsciously, they read a name destined to stand one of the noblest in the annals of mankind; for it introduced Major George Washington, Adjutant General of the Virginia militia.

I have quoted that passage for a twofold purpose, one of which is to show you the unsurpassed clearness and picturesque beauty of this author's style. In the whole paragraph it hardly would be possible to change a word, or the position of a word, without damage. It is a style wonderful in its simplicity and purity, its directness and vigor, its pictorial charm. You will find it everywhere. In no historical writings will you have the reality of events more vividly brought before you; the author had the power of identifying himself with them, as if he had traversed the swamps with La

Salle, and lived in the bark-roofed cabin with the priest; as if he had been an eye-witness of Braddock's defeat. When you read that bloody story in Chapter VII. you will feel as if you yourself had been a looker-on.

In this part, you have the true story of the Acadians (different from that in *Evangeline*); you see of what rude elements the Provincial army was made; you meet John Stark and Rogers "the Ranger;" you feel afresh the horrors of the savage raids; you live in terror of ambuscades; you wait in suspense to learn the fate of the frontier forts and their brave defenders. Last of all these intensely dramatic scenes, you witness the desperate attempts to gain the Heights of Quebec, you see the plateau of grass patched with corn fields, the Plains of Abraham, where the long, long struggle between England and France for American dominion came to its final issue, where Wolfe fell and Montcalm received his death-shot.

Our author loves a hero; he delights to portray a character; to picture the man, bringing him out of the past and making him alive before us. He

has done this for the two brave officers who gave the title to this, his crowning work.

He has done it, too, for an Indian chief, who is the subject of another volume, which, though standing independently and written earlier than the others may be said to belong here — *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*. Though small space remains, let me say that the introductory part is a careful account of the social institutions and habits, and the tribal relations of the North American Indians. Probably in no one volume will you find so much, put in so concise and attractive shape — their order of tribes, councils, plan of government, what the *totem* meant, their ancient transmitted customs which took the place of laws.

The main theme is the gathering of all the Indians into one great confederacy to strike for their lost territory; and the aspect of the country when this is about to take place is sketched — the loneliness, the scattered Indian villages; even in the most populous portion “one might sometimes journey for days together through the twilight forest and meet no human form;” the English

settlements lay "like a narrow strip between the wilderness and the sea," with places of rendezvous and outposts.

Pontiac, at the head of the confederacy, a man of remarkable foresight and power over his people, enters upon the scene at about fifty, in 1760, when Rogers the Ranger with his men was sent to the western forts to take possession in the name of His Britanic Majesty. Pontiac, who had been an ally of the French, demands to know why they are there.

Soon begins the murderous strife, which means attack upon the forts, stratagems, ambushes, every diabolic measure that savages could resort to—it is a bloody, a curdling story, of which we have details even to the preparation where the Indians put on the war-paint. Through it all, we cannot help sharing the author's admiration for the man whom he calls "the greatest Indian on the American continent." Pontiac was assassinated by a strolling Indian, but, says the historian,

whole tribes were rooted out to expiate it . . . over the grave of Pontiac more blood was poured out in atonement than flowed from the hecatomb of slaughtered heroes on the

corpse of Patroclus. . . . Neither mound nor tablet marked the burial place of Pontiac. For a mausoleum, a city [St. Louis] has risen above the forest hero, and the race whom he hated with such burning rancor trample with unceasing footsteps over his forgotten grave.

I hope I have been able to indicate to you that vast pleasure and profit await you in reading the works of this historian, and that you will be tempted to avail yourself of the whole series. Great enjoyment is before you.

Francis Parkman was born in Boston, September 16, 1823, and in these later years his time is chiefly spent there and at his summer home a few miles out, by Jamaica Pond, where he indulges himself in his favorite pastime of horticulture, and may be found of a summer day at work among his beloved roses and lilies — you will notice how flowers bloom along the pages of his books — of which he is so fond and for the cultivation of which he is so distinguished that he has written a “Book of Roses,” and had a lily named for him, *Lilium Parkmanni*.

NOTE. — His books are *Pioneers of France in the New World*, *The Jesuits in North America*, *La Salle and the Dis*

covery of the Great West, The Old Régime in Canada, Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV., Montcalm and Wolfe, The Oregon Trail, The Conspiracy of Pontiac. He has lately prepared a *Historic Handbook of the Northern Tour*. A short sketch of his life may be found in *The Critic* of February 27, 1886. In connection with the Acadian episode you will find it of interest to read *Evangeline*; and *Hiawatha*, and the *Algonquin Legends* of Charles G. Leland may afford help in understanding Indian customs and traditions. It is also well to read what Bancroft says upon these topics.



GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

XI.

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

INFINITE variety goes to the making of literature, and we would not have it otherwise if we could. We do not want all, or much, to be of the sledge-hammer style of Carlyle ; we weary of the ponderous sentences of Dr. Johnson, even of the elegant finish of Addison. It would not be satisfactory to have all writers rambling and reminiscent like De Quincey and Ruskin, notwithstanding their wondrous affluence of words, their suggestiveness, their picturesqueness and charm. We tire too much of the stately and statuesque, of the too highly elaborated, of the abrupt and brusque, of too much piquancy or too much dash.

We must not read history only, or biography, or dry essays on vital subjects to the exclusion of everything else. What would life be with the

poetry eliminated from it? Let us have our ideals, only they must be high ones; let us sometimes — not too often — dream dreams, even as the old book-keeper did in *Prue and I*, provided they make us gentler, tenderer, purer, kindlier.

Take away from literature the poetic and imaginative part, and what a dreary residue it would be! Take away the beings who have had no existence but in the author's brain, and what wide, what awfully wide gaps there would be! The favorites of your childhood would be the first to go. You would lose your fairy princes and princesses, Cinderella, and the Mother Goose people of your earliest remembrance. As with the waving of a conjurer's wand, away, away they go; as swiftly and as noiselessly as the fairies who had been dancing on the sands by moonlight, in Allston's lovely sketch. Robinson Crusoe would go; and the Pilgrim to the Celestial City and all he had to do with. Prospero and Ariel would be no more; Oberon and Titania and Robin Good-fellow would be spirited away.

Are you acquainted with the "Howadji?" Do

you know "Prue" and the book-keeper? Have you ever mused over the unfortunate possession Titbottom had in his magic spectacles?—spectacles with the power of magic that was malign, not beneficent. If so, you know the quality of this author's prose, unlike anything you have yet had brought before you. There is always the same individual imprint in whatever his pen touches. You see it month by month, in the Easy Chair of *Harper's Monthly*—a little dreamy, full of memories with a flavor of pensiveness that you are conscious of, as you are of a delicate perfume. In the perfection of finish, the elegance and refinement of language, there is a hint of Irving, and there is a something, not easily defined, which is a reminder of Charles Lamb. And yet, Curtis is like neither.

If you would know for yourself just what it is that I find such difficulty in defining, put yourself under the spell, and read *Prue and I*, one of the most engaging of modern classics, a little volume made up of seven short sketches. What makes the charm? There is no story, no grand march

of syllables, no incisive statement, no crystallized thought to compel your attention. Yes; where lies the charm? You have it the same in the Howadji books of travel.

It is the daintiest of poetic prose. It is not the bread of life, but a choice conserve. You do not care to have all quince or all pine-apple, but when you spread your table you would not forego the exquisite aroma and the delicious flavor which give zest to your banquet. When you have our author for your guide you find yourself in the realm of fancy, and for the time being you walk in the glamour that it casts over common things. Too much of such prose would be enervating, like soft airs, floating clouds, the fragrance of flowers, the calm of summer seas. You do not find here the sinews and thews, the brawn and muscle of literature, but another and essential part, refinement, elegance, delicacy, quiet humor, something subtle and evasive; what odor is to the tuberose, what poetry is to language.

It is an ineffably lovely quality of the imagination which conjures up pictures, like that in Elia's

“Dream Children,” in the seven sketches mentioned. See how the gray-haired book-keeper indulges his fancies about his Spanish castles, in “My Chateaux”:

My finest castles are in Spain. It is a country famously romantic, and my castles are all of perfect proportions and appropriately set in the most picturesque situations. I have never been to Spain myself, but I have naturally conversed much with travellers to that country. . . . The wisest of them told me that there were more holders of real estate in Spain than in any region he had ever heard of, and they are all great proprietors. Every one of them possesses a multitude of the stateliest castles. . . . It is not easy to say how I know so much, as I certainly do about my castles in Spain. The sun always shines upon them. They stand lofty and fair in a luminous, golden atmosphere, a little hazy and dreamy perhaps, like the Indian summer. . . . All the sublime mountains, and beautiful valleys, and soft landscapes that I have not yet seen are to be found in the grounds. . . . From the windows of those castles look the beautiful women whom I have never seen, whose portraits the poets have painted. . . . The lights that never shone glance at evening in the vaulted halls upon banquets that were never spread.

How delightful it would be if you could read in

connection with this some of the poems in verse (for this, you know, is a poem in prose) where a similar fancy has taken form in words. Thus, Mrs. Browning called hers "The House of Clouds;" Tennyson dreamed of "The Lotos-Eaters," and "The Palace of Art;" and in the poems of a writer on this side the ocean, "A. W. H." (Rose Terry Cooke), you will find a veritable Spanish Chateau, entitled "En Espagne," in perfect verse, beginning :

I built a palace white and high
 With gold and purple tapestried.
 No dusty highway ran thereby,
 But guarded alleys to it led
 And shaven lawns about were spread
 Where bee and moth danced daintily.

The old book-keeper of Curtis has the vision and the faculty divine ; he does not need to leave the room to see the world, for he says :

An orange takes me to Sorrento, and roses when they blow to Paestum. The camelias in Aurelia's hair bring Brazil into the happy room she treads. . . . The pearls upon her neck make me free of the Persian Gulf. Upon her

shawl, like the Arabian prince upon his carpet, I am transported to the valley of Cashmere, and thus as I daily walk in the bright spring days, I go round the world.

He can sit upon the shore, and see in one ship Cleopatra's galley, Columbus' Santa Maria, the Bucentaur of the Adriatic, the Spanish Armada, the May Flower, and all the famous ships of history, tradition and song. In "Sea from Shore" he lets the vessel from India take him far away. He says of his own resources :

For those of us whom Nature means to keep at home she provides entertainment. One man goes four thousand miles to see Italy, and does not see it, he is so short-sighted. Another is so far-sighted that he stays in his room and sees more than Italy :

which is his poetical way of telling us what writers before and since have said, and which you will apprehend for yourselves, if you are true observers, that the eye sees only what it has in itself the power of seeing, but having power, sees wonderful and precious things hidden from other eyes that have it not.

The seven sketches referred to are "Dinner

Time," "My Chateaux," "Sea from Shore," "Tit-bottom's Spectacles," "A Cruise in the Flying Dutchman," "Family Portraits," "Our Cousin the Curate;" and if you fail to appreciate their beauty it is because your taste is not educated. Curtis's one novel *Trumps* you will perhaps better like, written to show up the folly, shame and wickedness of society, after the Thackeray manner, with a spice of sarcasm, pungent and biting. There is a sweet, true, pure girl for a heroine, Hope Wayne, the primness of whose bringing up is intimated thus:

So Hope as a child had played with little girls who were invited to Pinewood—select little girls, who came in the prettiest frocks and behaved in the prettiest way, superintended by nurses and ladies maids. They tended their dolls peaceably in the nursery; they played clean little games upon the lawn. . . . They were not chattering French nurses who presided over these solemnities; they were grave, housekeeping, Mrs. Simcoe-kind of people. Julia and Mary were exhorted to behave themselves like little ladies, and the frolic ended by their all taking books from the library shelves and settling properly in a large chair, or on the sofa, or even upon the piazza if it had been nicely

dusted and inspected until the setting sun sent them away with the calmest kisses at parting.

It was in the days of a genuine old-time minister, who wore

a silken gown in summer, and a woolen gown in winter, and black worsted gloves, always with the middle finger of the right-hand glove slit that he might more conveniently turn the leaves of the Bible, and the hymn-book, and his own sermons.

And it looks at first as if we were going to have a book of the country life of Curtis's own youth in a rural town in Massachusetts, but New York city soon draws in the characters, and it ends in a whirlpool of fashion and folly, amidst which the face of Hope Wayne shines out serene and unspoiled, sweet and lovable to the end. There is a dreadful Aunt Dagon (who ought to have been Dragon), and upstart people who have nothing but money—the Dinkses and Newts and Van Boosenbergs and their kind.

In that novel you have a vivid description of the wonderful boy-preacher, Summerfield, who

magnetized the people, so that one of his hearers said :

I have been into the old John Strut meeting-house when the crowds hung out of the windows and doors like swarming bees clustered upon a hive. He swayed them as wind bends a grain field.

Somewhat in contrast to this boy with the sweet blue eyes, and "face of earnest expression and a kind of fairy sweetness," comes a fine account of Dr. Channing, whose style and influence were evidently not without potency over Curtis, whose belief is of the Channing order. Read it, that you may know just what was the presence and manner of that distinguished New England divine of rarely fine qualities and saintly life :

In a few minutes a slight man, wrapped in a black silk gown slowly ascended the pulpit stairs, and before seating himself stood for a moment looking down at the congregation. His face was small and thin and pale, but there was a pure light, an earnest spiritual sweetness in the eyes — the irradiation of an anxious soul. . . . A natural manly candor certified the truth of every word he spoke. . . . As he warmed in his discourse a kind of celestial grace glimmered about his person, and his pale, thoughtful face kindled and

beamed with holy light. His sentences were entirely simple. . . . The people sat as if they were listening to a disembodied soul.

You will remember that in *The Minister's Wooing* of Mrs. Stowe you have a powerful portraiture of another New England clergyman of former days, and that to the novelist we often owe some of the best pictures of actual people that we find anywhere in print.

Another book by Curtis which had great popularity, showing up the hollowness and snobbishness of New York society, after the same Thackeray manner, was *The Potiphar Papers*; but those of his writings of greatest interest to you are the books of travel, the *Nile Notes of a Howadji*, and *The Howadji in Syria*. Romantic yet realistic, steeped in the poetry and glow of the orient, each volume of his Eastern experiences has the same luxuriance of language, while giving at the same time a more satisfactory impression of the scenes and places than columns of matter-of-fact description would do. They are summer books, to dream over, under the trees, in the

hammock, on the veranda. Different books are for different times and seasons and places. Some are to be read when snow-bound, in a cosey corner by the evening lamp; some are for odd hours, left to lie about on the window seat and taken up by snatches, like Leigh Hunt's; some are for travelling companions, but the Howadji books are for summer days. Esthetic, leisurely, strangely fascinating, and potent over the young imagination. There is a golden haze about them, and yet through it we see distinctly what he said, and in a light we can never forget. Here are bits from what he says about his first sight of Jerusalem :

I passed rapidly over this lofty, breezy table-land with an inconceivable ardor of expectation. . . . As I paced more slowly along the hills, the words of the psalm suddenly rang through my mind, like a sublime organ peal through a hushed cathedral. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the North, the city of the Great King." . . . The high land unrolled itself more broadly. The breezy morning died into silent noon. . . . There was a low line of wall, a minaret, a black dome, a few flat roofs, and in the midst a group of dark, slender cypresses, and olives and palms. There lay Jerusalem dead

in the white noon. The desolation of the wilderness moaned at her gates. There was no suburb of trees or houses. She lay upon a high hill in the midst of hills barren as those we had passed. There were no sights or sounds of life. The light was colorless, the air was still. Nature had swooned around the dead city. There was no sound in the air; but a wailing in my heart.

When he was in Nazareth the music of the convent bells brought up that New England town which was Hope Wayne's home, and here follows an autobiographic passage which perfectly represents both the style and the meditative spirit of the man :

My heart sang hymns, and preached of remembered days and places, — June Sundays in country churches, to which we walked along the edges of the fields, and under branching elms hushed in Sunday repose, — of the long, village road, with the open wagons and chaises, in which the red-handed farmers in holiday suits drove the red-cheeked family to the church-door, . . . the long sermon, of which I faithfully remembered the text and forgot the drift, and in which the names of Galilee, and Mary, and Nazareth were sweet sounds only, filling my mind with vague imagery, whose outline has long since faded, the flowers and the sunny hay fields breathing sweetly in at the open window,

. . . the people in the pews, all whose faces have vanished now, save hers, so many years my elder, yet still radiant with youth, queenly in beauty and bearing, who came, when all were seated, following the old grandfather with powdered hair and gold-headed cane, and who sat serene during the service, while I, an eight years' child, felt a vague sadness overshadow the sweet day, and quite forgot the sermon.

Compare his pictures with those of any other writer of Eastern travel. The Howadji's have that golden light thrown over prosaic reality. His is the very romance of travel. There is nothing else so steeped in oriental atmosphere — you feel it as you feel the warm, soft air of a summer night. He takes in all that is picturesque and genial, and yields himself to the spell, which you, too, will come under ; and you, too, will dream as he did and think yourself in Syria or on the Nile.

You will find it interesting to take up books by other writers over the same routes. Look over those of Bayard Taylor ; *The Land and the Book* of Dr. Thomson ; Henry M. Field's *From Egypt to Japan, On the Desert*, and *Among the Holy Hills* ;

William C. Prime's *Boat-Life in Egypt and Nubia* and *Tent-Life in the Holy Land*; Charles Dudley Warner's *My Winter on the Nile* and *In the Levant*; in a word acquaint yourself with the experiences and impressions of different authors on the same subject, and so test your powers of criticism and comparison, and arrive at your own conclusions.

George William Curtis was born in Providence, Rhode Island, Feb. 24, 1824. He was one of the brilliant company who tried the famous Brook Farm experiment; spent two years in foreign travel, and after his return was on the staff of the New York *Tribune*; was editor of that capital but short-lived magazine, *Putnam's Monthly*; was for many years, as you know, one of the most popular speakers in the "lecture field," and long ago (perhaps more than thirty years) settled into the Easy Chair of *Harper's Monthly*, since which withdrawal, no more books. His books belong to his early manhood; but, as before indicated, the same qualities of elegance, high-breeding, refined taste which distinguish the man, are in all his work. The occupant of the Easy Chair is the Howadji of old. The

essay-ish paragraphs from that cosey retreat are choice and captivating.

His home is on Staten Island, and near it is a little Gothic church where sometimes of a Sunday, he reads a sermon. A lady who was an ardent admirer of his, while visiting in the neighborhood went one day to hear him, and she wrote to a friend:

“The small church in which he officiates is a quaint building with many points, the surroundings being quite country-like. As we sat in the carriage waiting for the gates to open, the birds sang, making sweeter music than the bells. . . The chancel window is of stained glass, circular, and the colors blue and gold, and each side are fluted pillars the same colors; a little lower down, the organ; and as these are the prevailing tints everything harmonizes and the effect is very pretty. As Mr. Curtis walked up the aisle, my first impression of him was of harmony. I was not disappointed in the man who wrote *Prue and I*, and if he had leaned over the desk excusing Adoniram's absence from church I should not have been surprised. . .

. I never heard such clear, fine pronunciation as his ; it must have required years of study to have reached such perfection.”

NOTE. — The list of Curtis's books is as follows : *Lotus Eating* (a record of summer rambles in America), *Nile Notes of a Howadji, Prue and I*, *The Howadji in Syria*, *The Potiphar Papers*, *Trumps*. A sketch of his Life is to be found in *The Century* for February, 1883.



DONALD GRANT MITCHELL.

XII.

DONALD GRANT MITCHELL.

LET us call him Ik Marvel, for by that name and no other we first knew him, in those early books, *Reveries of a Bachelor* and *Dream Life*. Here is the identical *Dream Life* now, which has been lying about on some handy shelf, as if somebody would be wanting to take it up, for these twenty-five years or more; in dark-green covers, with red edges, a much thumbed and slightly shaky volume, but good for service for many years to come.

If you were to look it over — this book written in his early manhood — you would notice the same quality which has continued to prove captivating to his readers all along through everything he has written since. You will see a love of country life, warm and abiding; an intuitive sense of the beau-

tiful, refinement, and taste ; and underlying all, prevailing over all, that delicacy and sympathy and tenderness of feeling which we call sentiment.

Not sentimentality : do not mistake, for there is a wide, wide difference between the two, as wide as that between an affected and a natural feeling, between sham and sincerity, for one is true while the other is pretence. Shall we not define sentiment in the words of Sir William Hamilton, as a term “applied to the higher feelings?” You will understand it as you read Ik Marvel. In this very book, *Dream Life*, in the second chapter, called “With my Reader,” he confesses to his sympathy and his honesty in writing down his fancies, and says :

Nature is very much the same thing in one man that it is in another : and as I have already said, Feeling has a higher truth in it than circumstance. Let it only be touched fairly and honestly, and the heart of humanity answers. . . . Of one thing I am sure :— if my pictures are fair, worthy, and hearty, you *must* see it in the reading.

That is just what has come to pass. People have recognized what he hoped they would, and

those who read him of the new generation that has come up since the words were written, appreciate that truth to human experience, those touches which show the whole world of one kin in loving and hoping, in suffering and sorrowing. He is sympathetic and tender; the very atmosphere of his books is genial; they are full of home love, fireside content, family life, and the domestic feelings which no one can too sacredly cherish, the sweet sanctities and charities of every-day living under the same roof-tree, by the same hearth-side.

Then, again, his own personality is in every volume, almost on every page. How unlike authors are in this respect you will one day know, when you are able to discriminate through wider reading and careful study and comparison. Some writers hardly give you a hint of their individuality, they are so separate from their books, as if the books were merely the result of brain-work, or were purely imaginative or outside of themselves. Yet, after all, it is this personality which interests us and invests one's writings with a charm whose power is felt at once; even if it is such bare ego

tism as in the case of Ruskin, we delight in it. What is there more attractive than the frank revelations in those chapters of *Præterita* just now being published, where John Ruskin shows us all his heart and talks about himself with the candor of dear old Anthony Trollope in his autobiography? Ik Marvel does not follow the Ruskin method, to be sure, but the boy, the collegian, the man in his own library, in his garden, abroad in his fields, is before us. We know his tastes, his favorite books, his walks, his employments, his feelings. We have him for a companion, and he is always that, more than he is the author. So it follows that the books he wrote are winning and engaging, and very much alive they are, too, with real life-blood pulsing through them.

Of all American authors I can think of no one who has so much of boy feeling and boy experience, who understands a boy's nature so well. Usually it is in the country that his boy finds delight, and there is nothing worth finding out or enjoying that he does not know and enter into. Ik Marvel was not in a strict sense country-born,

for his native place was the old town of Norwich in Connecticut (where his life began in April, 1822), but he must have early known the joys that farm-life has for a child. It is Connecticut country living that he pictures; the flavor of the old hill pastures, of the meadows and orchards, of blooming peach-trees, of fennel and clover, of wild-grapes in grape-time and nuts in nutting-time is along the pages. That State has had liberal treatment in the lighter literature of New England, in Mrs. Stowe's old-time stories and those of Rose Terry Cooke and Ik Marvel's loving reproductions of landscape and farm-life as in his boyhood he delighted in them and in manhood transferred them to his magic page.

I have marked a score of passages in his books to quote for you, beginning with the old garret :

I know no nobler forage ground for a romantic, venture-some, mischievous boy, than the garret of an old family mansion on a day of storm. It is a perfect field of chivalry. The heavy rafters, the dashing rain, the piles of spare mattresses to carouse upon, the big trunks to hide in, the old white coats and hats hanging in obscure corners, like ghosts

— are great! And it is so far away from the old lady who keeps rule in the nursery that there is no possible risk of a scolding. . . . There is no baby in the garret to wake up. There is no company in the garret to be disturbed by the noise. There is no crotchety old uncle, or grandma, with their everlasting — “Boys — boys!” — and then a look of such horror!

But there is not space for many of them. This, however, you shall have about the Fourth of July, from one of his later books, *Bound Together* :

I do not know what the habit of the boys' schools may be now-a-days; but in those old times when *we* wore roundabouts, and studied Adams' Latin Grammar, the Master (or “Principal,” as we Scottishly called him) used to give us a day's excursion by omnibus or stage-coach on the Fourth. And we piled into, and all over such vehicles, by the dozen, infesting the doors and windows and roof — hanging about the beloved stage-coach like bees on gone-by fruit — making the hills resound with our jollity. . . . The old ladies, standing akimbo in the doors, stared blank astonishment at us through their iron-rimmed spectacles, and shy girls caught admiring glimpses of our spick and span new white drilling from behind the farm-house curtains. What a triumphal progress it was to be sure! Dew on the grass, larks singing, late roses blooming, cherries ripening, tall

rye waving, the old coach crick-cracking. . . . Then we stopped towards high noon at some huge, lumbering village tavern for dinner. A tavern dinner!—my mouth waters even now to think what ambrosian fare had been provided. . . . A turkey—positively a turkey (and stuffed too)—at one end of the long table, and at the other—great heavens!—a dapper, crisp, curled-tailed pig, with a sprig of parsley in his mouth, and giblets and what-not, in a little paunch-y tureen of gravy close by.

And this :

Who that feels the gray shadows of middle age thickening over his head (for my part I confess to it) does not remember the peach-orchard near to every old homestead of New England, and the rich burden of rare-ripes and free-stones and cling-stones (before yet the magnificent Melocoton was known) and how round-jacketed school-boys with big pouches of pockets thought it no theft to abstract a few from between the fence-bars.

And these scraps—tantalizing enough I trust to make you read *Ik Marvel* and become acquainted with him :

I believe that boys' vacations, now-a-days, come around in July, or thereabouts; but five and thirty years ago, in those boys' schools of which I had painful experience, va-

cations happened somewhere in October. . . . What a gorgeous thing it was to take that first tramp after the return . . . through the melon-patch where the yellow-faced cantaloupes smiled at us ! We knew well enough that the cantaloupes would not be gone ; we knew some “roasting ears” would be left : we knew the Pound-sweets would be just at their best. . . . I do not know how a month could have a better naming for a boy than to be called vacation month. . . . I think that a good, wholesome longing for vacation-time to come is one of the best possible evidences that a boy is kept up to the notch of a good daily gain.

And now see what advice he gives in the closing words of “Two College Talks,” to students :

Live up to the level of your best thought ; keep the line of your life tense and true ; it is but a thread ; but it belongs to the great Republican warp, where Time is weaving a Nation. You cannot alter its attachment yonder, to the past — nor yonder, to the unrolling years. . . . And if you would broider such things there as will stand fast, and carry your name worthily upon the roll of history, you will have need of all your energy to dare — all your cultivation to refine — of all your charity to ennoble.

Let the hope of this . . . keep you wakeful to all honorable duties. Let it make you bold, and honest, and

painstaking. Let it nerve you to shun affectations — to hate shams — to love truth — to cherish simplicity; and then — whatever may betide — you will walk with a freer and more elastic step toward the gates, where we must all go in.

Ik Marvel wrote one novel, about twenty years ago, *Dr. Johns*, the story of an old-time Connecticut minister, and he has a volume called *Seven Stories, with Basement and Attic*, made up from reminiscences of travel; but with these exceptions, and the two named at the beginning of this paper, his writings are chiefly of rural life.

Many years ago he bought a country place not far from New Haven, and there after his own tasteful plan re-modelled and embellished till the beautiful home which he named Edgewood grew with the years, as a true home with all its accessories and adornments of tree and vine, of shrub and lawn must grow, for it does not come into being in a day. To know about it, and how the master's heart was in all the work and in all the growing, you must read *My Farm of Edgewood* — a book practical enough for an agriculturist, yet romantic enough for a poet; picturesque, and full

of that personality before referred to. You will read about the stone cottage he built, with its gables and sharp pent roof, the gray walls which lichens and creepers are decorating, and all about his country tastes which have made it so attractive without, so restful within.

If you wish to know more about it, and see the sketches of house and gable, of porch and gateway, and know just what the ideas of the owner were and are, about the making of a home, from the house-building down to the simplest details, which with him are esthetic and refined, read *Out-of-Town Places*.

If you would know yet more, and more about the owner, read *Wet Days at Edgewood*, which is made up of rambling sketches about some of the "worthies" who wrote something concerning agriculture. Of such books he says he has "a motley array" in one corner of his library. Be not deterred by the fact that he calls them "farm-books," for not to these does he confine himself; on the contrary, they serve as the excuse (as one may say) for some of the most delightful off-hand

writing and personal revelations of our author himself. They remind one of Leigh Hunt in more ways than one, but chiefly in that joy in books which is so marked a feature in Hunt.

What Ik Marvel says so lovingly and gracefully about Virgil and others among the ancients is pleasant reading for your own rainy days ; and be sure to read those papers, called "A Picture of Rain," "English Weather," "Old English Homes," "A British Tavern," "A Brace of Pastorals," "Goldsmith," "William Cowper," "Gilbert White," and "Country Story-tellers." What toothsome dainties in prose they are ! If you are tempted to take up some of the authors he writes about, so much the better. Why not read the *Vicar of Wakefield* after you have read what he says. "I do," he writes, "still keep his *Essays* or his *Vicar* in my hand, or in my thought most lovingly."

And how can you let "As you Like It" alone after reading :

One pastoral remains to mention, published at the very opening of the year 1600, and spending its fine forest

aroma thenceforward all down the century. I mean Shakespeare's play of "As you Like It."

From beginning to end the grand old forest of Arden is astir overhead; from beginning to end the brooks bawl in your ear; from beginning to end you smell the bruised ferns and the delicate-scented wood flowers. . . . Who . . . will match us the fair, lithe, witty, capricious, mirthful, buxom Rosalind? Nowhere in books have we met with her like,—but only at some long-gone picnic in the woods, where we worshipped "blushing sixteen" in dainty boots and white muslin. . . .

. . . "As you Like It" is as broad as the sky, or love, or folly, or hope.

In *Bound Together*—the felicitous title of a "Sheaf of Papers"—you come upon more of the Edgewood pastorals, under the divisions called "Procession of the Months," and "In doors and Out of doors," winding up with a children's chapter and Thanksgiving Day.

The influence of Ik Marvel is tranquilizing and refining. If sometimes there is an excess of sentiment, we know that the springs are pure and sweet, the sources deep and unfailing of such tender feeling that we do not care to criticise.

He has kept his hold upon two generations of readers because he is true to human nature, in sympathy with childhood, and one at heart with youths and maidens, so that the stories he tells are their own lives, their own hopes and joys and anticipations. There is an air of repose, of restfulness and peace about his writings. Some one has said of them that "they are the wood-fire on the hearth in American letters. They are light, warmth, cheer."

NOTE. — Nearly all his writings are in the following books: *Fresh Gleanings* (European Travel), *Reveries of a Bachelor*, *Dream Life*, *My Farm of Edgewood*, *Wet Days at Edgewood*, *Out-of-Town Places* (formerly *Rural Studies*), *Doctor Johns*, *Seven Stories, with Basement and Attic*, *Bound Together*, *About Old Story-Tellers*; and a new and complete edition has just been published, in unique, simple style, with characteristic prefatory notes by the author.



JACOB ABBOTT.



XIII.

“H. H.” AND OTHERS.

SINCE this series of papers was begun, one of the foremost women-writers of America has passed from this life. The hand of “H. H.” will write nothing more. How pathetic that brief statement seems when we think of the brilliant spirit that was here a little more than a year ago!

It is well worth your while at this time, when her last work is passing through the press, to give attention to the books she has contributed to our literature. I know that they are all about you, some of them, indeed, almost fresh from her pen—it seems but yesterday, perhaps, that you read *Ramona*, and *Zeph* you have but just laid down.

Looking back now and considering how late it was when she began writing prose (in 1866, when she was thirty-five years old), never dreaming of

becoming an author of distinction, we are surprised at both the quantity and quality.

Let me recall to you, in scantest outline, her personal and literary history. As "H. H." the world of her readers — and a wide world it is — has known and will remember her; the two modest initials which represent such an amount of exquisite work, which have always been so warmly welcomed, and which will be so sadly missed! Helen Maria Fiske was her maiden name, and she was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, October 18, 1831. On the 28th of October, 1852, she was married to Captain Edward B. Hunt of the United States Army, and on the 2d of October, 1863, she became a widow. One son had died when an infant, and the other died in less than two years after his father, so that, bereaved and heart-broken, she withdrew from society and even from her best friends, giving herself up to the feeling that life had nothing more for her.

She had a fine, natural gift of expression in poetry, and when the first sharp pain was over she did what hundreds of others have done, put her

sorrow into verse, and soon the world recognized a new poet. A sketch called “In the White Mountains” was her introduction to prose, and the success and fame which eventually came to her from this simple beginning were a revelation and continual surprise to her.

In October, 1875, she was married to William Sharpless Jackson, and thenceforth her home was in Colorado Springs, whence she went for benefit to her health, to California, where, in San Francisco, she died August 12, 1885.

How slight is this thread of facts concerning a woman so rich in personal and intellectual gifts, of a spirit so alert, so responsive, so versatile, so full of enthusiasm! You know well how her burning indignation found a voice that made itself heard for the Indian; and you will mark all through her writings that she was easily kindled—a marvellously susceptible, electric being, all ardor and fire. You see it all through her *Bits of Talk about Home Matters*, where she enters the lists, or charges as a free lance, in hot attack on those who are guilty of wrongs to children.

Never did childhood have a more fearless, a more valiant champion, and one can but think how injudicious parents must have winced under the pricks and thrusts of her weapon that pierced the stoutest mail.

Her feelings were intense and her powers of observation of the keenest; she had the swift intuitions of genius and her pen was true to the thing she had to say. Gifts for writing may come by nature, but if that were all, how discouraging it would be! What if "H. H." had never developed what she seems hardly to have known she possessed until the accident (almost) of a single sketchy article in prose induced her to attempt further work? Study, reading, culture, painstaking, thoroughness — all these are quantities which enter into the training of a writer. No successful author ever trusted to born gifts; the equipments are not ready provided, and it is not always a royal highway with banners flying along which one goes. I think I have seen that she was an acute critic of her own composition as well as that of others; that she made a careful study

of style, and, as an instance of it, that she took certain paragraphs of Higginson's which she much admired and changed the construction of the sentences to see in what their power and beauty as purely literary work consisted, and if any other arrangement would do as well.

You might try that with almost any descriptive page of her writing. You will find a wonderful affluence of language, charged with feeling, often the words rushing on impetuously; but what artistic finish, fitness, and completeness! Take this from her description of the Rocky Mountains in her *Bits of Travel at Home*:

There seemed no defined horizon to west, or north, or south; only a great, outlying continent of mountain peaks, bounding, upholding, containing the valley, and rounding, upholding and piercing the dome above it. There was no sound, no sight, no trace of human life. The silence, the sense of space in these Rocky Mountain solitudes cannot be expressed, neither can the peculiar atmospheric beauty be described. It is the result partly of the grand distances, partly of the rarefied air. The shapes are the shapes of the north, but the air is like the air of the tropics, shimmering, kindling. . . . No dome of Constantinople or

Venice, no pyramid of Egypt ever glowed and swam in warmer light and of warmer hue than do these colossal mountains.

Read what she says about the wild flowers of Colorado, where words crowd upon words as if they could not keep pace with her admiration, and the very pages glow and burn with color. Read about the gorgeously, the glory of autumn woods at Bethlehem in what she calls the "Miracle Play," and wherever she writes of skies or flowers, of anything rich, warm, beautiful. Her tastes were sumptuous; she revelled in color, and nowhere can be found finer word paintings than in her books. And the descriptions are always in harmony with the subject. Here, for example, from "The Katrina Saga," in *Glimpses of Three Coasts*, is a bit from the page and a half about the islands of the Norway coast:

There are myriads of them still unknown, untrodden, and sure to remain so forever, no matter how long the world may last. . . . At the mouths of the great fjords they seem sometimes to have fallen back and into line, as if to do honor to whomever might come sailing in. They mus:

have greatly helped the splendor of the processions of viking ships, a thousand years ago, in the days when a viking thought nothing of setting sail for the south or the east with six or seven hundred ships in his fleet. If their birch-trees were as plummy then as now, there was nothing finer than they in all that a viking adorned his ships with not even the gilt dragons at the prow.

If you wish to appreciate some of the finest work done by any of our countrymen and women, read *Ramona* again. It will bear more than one perusal. Leaving out of the question the purpose for which it was written, and reading it just as a story, consider its attractiveness and power. Notice the grace of the narrative — how easily it slips along without a break or a dull sentence or a sentence you would skip! the charm of the language, not a word that does not fit its place — how tempting and how delightful it is! the beauty of the description — you are transported to the Mexican house and are sharer of the life on the balcony, in the court, are present at the sheep-shearing and the feast! the reality and life-likeness of the people who live there — you become intent upon

watching the movements of the shrewd Senora and wonder over the success or failure of her plans. Study its construction, and the way in which character develops ; see with what a firm hand the author keeps the mastery over her subject, and yet with what impetuosity of feeling she enters into the wrongs of Ramona and Alessandro ! You will enjoy comparing this story with two strong novelettes by another of our best women writers — *The Led Horse Claim* and *John Bodewin's Testimony*, by Mary Hallock Foote, the artist author.

In reading "H. H." you always have a sense of such exuberance, such rapturous enjoyment of everything, perfume, flowers, sky and sea, scenery, travel ; she was part of them, partner, sharer with them. She threw her whole soul into everything, and a vital, positive life pulses along her pages. Bear this in your thought as your eye follows down the lines, and see how alive they are. You can separate some authors from their work ; or, to put it as it is, you cannot by any possibility connect them with it as a warm, human, living force ; you can-

not by what is written tell what manner of man or woman held the pen. But "H. H." is in every line, an ardent, eager, spirited woman, full of poetry, glowing with enthusiasm which was ready to leap into flame, and infusing herself into everything she wrote, coloring everything by her own personality. In no other American woman is this so pronounced a trait; in few will you find a nature at the same time so tropical and so sympathetic, taking expression in a style as clear and vigorous as it is captivating.

Especially for children she wrote *Nelly's Silver Mine*, *Bits of Talk for Young Folks*, *Mammy Tittleback and her Family*, and *The Hunter Cats of Connorloa*, besides editing *Letters from a Cat* (which was by her mother). The titles of her other prose works are *Bits of Travel* (foreign, and very charming), *Bits of Travel at Home* (California, Colorado and New England), *Bits of Talk about Home Matters*, *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*, *Hetty's Strange History*, *Ramona*, *A Century of Dishonor*, *Zeph*, *Glimpses of Three Coasts* (California and Oregon, Scotland and England, Norway, Denmark and Germany);

and soon to be published, *Between Whiles*, a volume of short stories, of which, not long before her death she wrote to her publishers, "Isn't it a lovely title?"

To what other authors of the many there are, shall I call your attention in the space that is left me? Do you need, does this generation of young people need, to be reminded of the beloved Jacob Abbott who did more for them, I have no hesitation in saying, than any other writer, perhaps it would be safe to say than any two or more writers? Abraham Lincoln paid his tribute to the little "Red Histories" by saying that he learned from them all the history he ever knew; and here, not many weeks ago, a lady who has written many excellent things, in a little article about bringing up boys, says, "over all the years that lie between us, I send my love to Jonas, as one of the best companions a little girl ever had, and the charming mentor of the little girl's brother."

Did it ever occur to you that so long ago as the time when Washington Irving and Cooper were writing sketches and novels this author was busy

over books for the young, and that he kept on writing book after book for them, and that that good, wise pen of his was never idle? He had wonderful tact and skill as a teacher, in management, in understanding character, a clear insight into what the needs of young people were, and from writing something to help those immediately under his care, the question naturally arose, Why not help thousands of boys and girls? Hence some of the wise and sound little books which have gone on in their influence in the ratio of Edward Everett Hale's *Ten Times One*.

The mind of Jacob Abbott must have been as clear as crystal to judge by the way his thoughts appear in print, by his accurate way of putting things, candid, discriminating and to the point. They are every day facts and moral lessons, but duty is presented as a pleasure, and the right way as the tempting way. Practical duties and employments, doing good, living right, building up character — these are favorite themes, just as vital to-day as when he wrote, and more needed, good for a thousand years and as much longer as

human nature, boy and girl nature, are what they were and are.

You have already had loving biographies of this teacher, pastor and author, and I am not expected to dwell upon the subject, but let me say that not long ago I had occasion to look over some of his books in a great public library, and found them thumbed and worn — that told the story of their popularity. History, biography, travels, science, out-of-door employments — he wrote of all these. In his series of adventure and travel he was pioneer of the Family Flights, the Zig-Zag and Bodley books and so many of that class which are favorites to-day. The stories of history and of biography written by himself and his brother (John S. C. who was also preacher and teacher) do not go out of date. Divided into "Founders of Empires," "British Kings and Queens," "Queens and Heroines," "Heroes of Roman History," "Later British Kings and Queens," and "Rulers of Later Times," they make a trim and compact little reference library of much in small space for your handy corner and often use. Any young person

who was brought up on Jacob Abbott's clear sense books, before the days of sensationalism, has something to be grateful for; and one who goes to them now finds soundness and simplicity, wholesome truth wholesomely treated, a whole gospel to be guided by.

You hardly need to have recalled to your mind another friend not long gone from this life, the author of *Yesterdays with Authors*, and *Underbrush*. The first-named is one of the books that stimulates the love for books. James T. Fields appreciated literature himself, and was a real friend to the young writers who went to him with their firstlings. He had keenest joy in books, and in those papers he shows the pleasant side, to make his authors attractive. It was one of the intense desires of his later life to have a good influence over young people, and his words are wise and cheering from out his own experience and genial wholeheartedness. In his *Underbrush* he says:

Instead of trying so hard as some of us do to be happy, as if that were the sole purpose of life, I would, if I were a boy again, try still harder to *deserve* happiness.

Of books and authors, this is characteristic of the man :

We can never be grateful enough to the men and women who have written books to make us more in love with the beauties and harmonies of nature, who have themselves been transported with the glories of her divine works.

And he adds that he always felt like taking off his hat when he met in the street the man (George B. Emerson) who wrote that valuable and attractive work on the "Trees and Shrubs of Massachusetts."

Already you have a long list, but you must add the dainty prose of Aldrich, and Warner with his mellowness and humor; and Holmes with his scintillations of wit flashing like the white light, the pellucid light of diamonds — unique, the only man of his kind, it will be long before you see another "autocrat." And in choosing American books do not forget Charles G. Leland's *Algonquin Legends*, and his book about the gypsies; or Drake's *Old Landmarks of Boston*, and *Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast*, and others from his pen; or Mrs. Rollins' *New England By-gones*,

a vivid reproduction of rural home-life sweet and true and charming, loyal to the past, but fresh as a morning in May; or Dana's *Two Years before the Mast*, best of all sea-books that have been written from a sailor's point of view, as enchanting for a boy as the *Arabian Nights*, as homely in its details as *Robinson Crusoe*. What vitality there is about a book which has real life inside of it, in its texture and substance, in its warp and woof! And such is this.

I cannot refrain from including another book, most delightful in its pictures of life in the Old Dominion, having the appearance of being genuinely as well as in form autobiographic (as it perhaps is to some extent)—the *Judith* of Marion Harland, to me more fascinating than anything else of hers I have ever read.

And yet one more, a thin volume of only five sketches — and one of them incomplete — its title *Old Salem*. The author, who wrote under the name of "Eleanor Putnam," was Mrs. Harriet L. V. Bates, and she died at Brookline, Massachusetts, March 13, 1886, at about the age of thirty.

I should like to quote liberally from "Old Salem Shops," and from "A Salem Dame School," to which she went wearing antiquated raiment, and carrying for a satchel

the old green bag in which my grandfather had carried his law papers. It was so long and I so short that it nearly touched the ground as I walked, and my book and my apple rolled about unpleasantly.

For a choice piece of writing, a perfect little crystal, read her "Salem Cupboards"—it is as dainty a bit as you will often find, after this style :

Foremost in the memory of delightful Salem cupboards stands the dining-room closet of a second-cousin of ours whom we called Cousin Susan. . . . A most delicious odor came forth when the door was opened : a hint of the spiciness of rich cake, a tingling sense of preserved ginger, and a certain ineffable sweetness which no other closet ever possessed. . . . At the left hand of Cousin Susan's shelves of china was a little cupboard with a diamond-paned glass door. . . . This little glass cupboard held the stock of foreign sweetmeats ; the round-shouldered blue jars, inclosed in network of split bamboo, which contained the fiery, amber ginger ; the flat boxes of guava jelly, hot curry powders, chilli sauce, and choleric Bengal chutney.

Here were two miniature casks of tamarinds, jolly and black. . . .

There were black fruit-cake in a japanned box; "hearts and rounds" of rich yellow pound cake; and certain delicate but inane little sponge biscuit, of which our cousin spoke by the old-fashioned name of diet — or, as she chose to pronounce it "dier" — bread. She always called the sponge cakes "little dier breads."

An entire paper ought to be given to single books where scenes or incidents of our own country form the subject. Another might profitably be devoted to biographies of American men and women by American writers. In the "Notes" to the preceding papers I have furnished you with many titles, but only a small number out of the rich store. To name a few more, beginning with Sparks who wrote twenty-five of persons more or less associated with our history, how quickly you are reminded of the full and carefully prepared and edited Lives and Letters of Daniel Webster, George Ticknor, Charles Sumner; the memorials of Bryant, and of John Howard Payne who wrote "Home, Sweet Home," of Agassiz, by his wife,

of Jacob Abbott (including, or prefacing, the work its author would have desired to be best known by, *The Young Christian*), the *Reminiscences of William Ellery Channing*, by Elizabeth Peabody. the Life and Letters of James and Lucretia Mott (delightful record of Quaker ways, of a liberal, loving household, and characters greatly to be admired), Miss Stebbins' memories of Charlotte Cushman, the Letters, with a biographical sketch of Lydia Maria Child (which will make you regret that it is too late to let her know how you honor her for her great, royal heart of unselfish devotion to a cause she was enlisted in, for her loyalty to friends and her patience and bravery), the memoir of Mrs. Edward Livingston, of Mary Lyon, of Alice B. Haven, of Mary L. Ware, of Mrs. Prentiss (author of *Stepping Heavenward*), that of General Bartlett, of James T. Fields, Holmes' memoir of Motley, the sketches called *Worthy Women of our First Century* (which includes that rare woman and scholar, Mrs. Ripley of Concord, Massachusetts), the list of distinguished men in the "American Statesmen" series, and "American Men of Let-

ters” series; and scores of others might be included, and nearly all are histories of the lives of Americans.

What treasures await you, lie ready at your hand! All are histories of the lives of Americans, worthy your earnest perusal, full of interest, in many cases having a charm beyond stories. How rich in lessons of wisdom and statesmanship, of culture and refinement, of goodness and Christian experience, of benevolence and self-denial, of true living and high thinking, of aspiration and endeavor, of fidelity to truth, to country, to science, to human kind are the pages represented by those names!



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

XIV.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, AND OTHER CRITICS.

YOU may be dismayed at the word "critics" and shrink from the phase of literature we are approaching, for hitherto you have had writers who had positive attractions for you — historians, novelists, essayists — and the present word suggests those who are severe, even censorious, and a kind of writing which is dry and prosy. But you will be agreeably disappointed and will take an altogether different view of the matter when you learn that a critic is not necessarily a fault-finder, even if that be the general opinion, and that you are to look upon him as a guide, as one who by insight, good judgment and training is qualified for that office.

As fair a definition as I can give you of criticism, in words, is that it is the interpretation of

an author. It is a department in literature, and has become indispensable as a help and a discipline. It opens your eyes to merits (and faults also) you might not have discerned ; it is an educator of the perceptions, of the taste, and the weighing and comparing faculties. If you wish as you grow older to understand the finer shades of meaning, and the different styles by which different writers express themselves, to be appreciative and discriminating, and to get the best there is out of a book, you will be only too glad to have recourse to the work of critics.

For one instance, when the time arrives for you to take up Shakespeare in earnest, you will if you are wise avail yourself of all the helps you can command from those who have made him a special study. If you can have access to the prose of Coleridge you will enjoy and ponder the brief but forceful comments he makes : you will be aided by the expository touches of Hazlitt in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* ; and for a most delightful analysis of many of the heroines, you will hardly find anything more desirable — both to

read and to own — than the *Characteristics of Women* by Mrs. Anna Jameson, which is a book that should be in every girl's library, on that special shelf where stand *Sesame and Lilies*, and *Craeford*, and other sweet and true books to which your attention has been directed in these two series of authors. Criticisms on the immortal dramatist are very abundant, and every year adds to the number; but for something that goes over the whole field, you cannot do better than choose the "Lectures" by one of our own countrymen, Henry Norman Hudson, a Shakespearian critic of high standing, one who almost deified Shakespeare (which is his chief fault), but whose work is excellent and is the result of a life-time of study. You will have no adequate idea how the beauty of a play like "Tempest" or of the character of a Miranda or Hermione will be revealed to you until you see them in the flood of strong light which a fine, sympathetic, cultured critic throws upon them. You need it, and will be grateful for it.

Among living American critics the name that stands highest is that of James Russell Lowell;

in liberal scholarship, keenness, brilliance and fine judgment no one surpasses him. The results of his work in this line you will find in *My Study Windows*, and in the two series called *Among my Books*. It is impossible to give you any conception of the breadth and insight of these papers. Your most profitable way of reaching them will be in connection with the subjects they treat of. When you read Shakespeare, acquaint yourself with the one entitled "Shakespeare Once More," which is full of suggestions about the influences of the age on that dramatist, and his fitness for the time in which he was born, also about the structure and the possibilities of their own noble English tongue as Shakespeare used it, about his adaptiveness to all understandings, because he knew human nature and wrote of it as he saw it, as it was, not as it ought to be. Much food for you is there in that meaty paper of Lowell's.

And when you are ready to read Wordsworth (as ready you must be some day), read the paper on him ; the same of Milton and others. That on Dante is considered the most thorough and by far

the ablest on the subject which has been produced in this country. Bear it in mind when the day arrives for Dante, and see what is the estimate put upon him by the most distinguished man of letters we have among us. But Milton and Wordsworth come before the Florentine. In company with your "Paradise Lost," have before you what Lowell says of its grandeur and sweep, like this :

In reading "Paradise Lost" one has a feeling of vastness. You float under an illimitable sky, brimmed with sunshine or hung with constellations ; the abysses of space are about you ; you hear the cadenced surges of an unseen ocean ; thunders mutter round the horizon ; and if the scene change, it is with an elemental movement like the shifting of mighty winds. . . He was founder of the vague, perhaps I should rather say the indefinite, where more is meant than meets the ear, than any other of our poets. He loved epithets (like *old* and *far*) that suggest great reaches, whether of space or time. . . Milton's respect for himself and for his own mind and its movements rises well nigh to veneration. . . There is no such unfailling dignity as his.

I wish I could have space to quote more, but you must read it, and as you do, mark the splen-

did structure of Lowell's sentences and what a power words are in his hands, how flexible is our language when a master of prose makes use of it. And here, in his paper on Keats, is something on this very subject ; most timely :

There is a great deal more than is commonly supposed in this choice of words. Men's thoughts and opinions are in a great degree vassals of him who invents a new phrase or re-applies an old epithet. *The thought of feeling a thousand times repeated becomes his at last who utters it best.* . . . As soon as we have discovered the word for our joy or sorrow we are no longer its serfs, but its lords.

That sentence which I have emphasised reveals the secret of a writer's power. Ponder it. You will find these three volumes full of choice bits of wisdom precious to one who loves our English tongue and delights in the beauty and strength of prose. What revelations we get of the penman's craft, of the guild of writers, of the workmen like Chaucer and Spenser ! What fine, careful studies of the work of a single poet, like Wordsworth ! The influences that made him what he was are sharply defined, his merits, and his faults, even

the wearisome poems, but then, says Lowell, in spite of the things that detract from his poetic excellence and symmetry :

With what splendors as of mountain-sunsets are we rewarded! What golden rounds of verse do we not see stretching heavenward with angels ascending and descending! What haunting harmonies hover around us deep and eternal like the undying barytone of the sea! and if we are compelled to fare through sands and desert wildernesses, how often do we not hear airy shapes that syllable our names with a startling personal appeal to our highest consciousness and our noblest aspiration such as we wait for in vain in any other poet!

Read this, and from page 240 on to the close of the paper, and you will get as just an estimate of Wordsworth as can be anywhere found in the same space, if indeed it be not clearer, wiser, fairer as well as more sympathetic than from any other critic. And the glow there is about Lowell's prose — how soon you will see and feel it! All the ripeness of his scholarship is back of it, all his years of training are in it. No man is born a writer like that; nor does the skill come without

painstaking and an absorption of all that is best in the older writers. When you consider this, you will begin to appreciate the value to you of one who brings to his pleasant task not only keenness of perception, but the result of his life's reading and work. The papers of most interest to you are "Carlyle," "Abraham Lincoln," and "Chaucer," in *My Study Windows*, "Shakespeare once more" in the first series of *Among my Books*, and "Spenser," "Wordsworth," "Milton," and "Keats," in the second series: there is also in the first volume named a criticism of Thoreau which gives rather an adverse view of him.

Let me refer you for some knowledge (which you ought to have) of a man who gave the fruit of his scholarship to newspaper literature in some of the ablest criticism our country has known, to the biography of the late George Ripley in the "American Men of Letters" series. His work you cannot avail yourself of, but by reading this record of what he did, you can at least see the importance of the department we are considering, and how he dignified it. See his explanation to a

friend of the reason for the ease with which in the later years of his life he "threw off" an article: "It is not wonderful seeing that I have been fifty years about it;" and this is quoted from one of his reviews in illustration of his own literary principles: "He who does not write as well as he can on every occasion will soon form the habit of not writing well at all." Mr. Ripley was connected with *Harper's Magazine* for thirty years, a portion of the time as writer of literary reviews, then as a reader of manuscripts on all subjects, to which he gave his careful attention, without prejudice or favoritism, but always in the interests of literature, and then submitted his opinion. These "opinions," terse, deliberately weighed and conscientious, are said by the biographer to show better his "extraordinary mental force" than even his elaborate reviews.

The objection of inaccessibility to the results of such faithful work does not apply to another man eminent in this field who has also lately died, Edwin Percy Whipple. His books are in public libraries, and most of them have been there a long

enough time to have become well known and to have been well read. In all, his collected essays, criticisms and lectures make six volumes. He was a clear thinker and able writer, and has the distinction of being one of the earliest to give his energies to this kind of writing and to raise the tone of culture in America. In the first volume of his *Essays and Reviews* he takes a survey of the "Poets and Poetry of America," of "English Poets of the Nineteenth Century" — subjects to which we shall presently come in the later books of Stedman. In that volume you will find a notable paper on Daniel Webster, prepared on occasion of the publication of the great statesman's speeches and forensic arguments. You may be surprised to see Webster ranked among writers, but Whipple considers him one of the masters of the English language, and what he says you must not fail to read. A passage or two I will quote :

In all the characteristics of great literary performances they are fully equal to many works which have stood the test of ages. . . . Every great writer has a style of his own, constructed according to the character of his mind and

disposition. The style of Mr. Webster has great merit, not only for its vigor, clearness and compression, but for the broad impress it bears of the writer's nature. It owes nothing to the usual tricks of rhetoric, but seems the enforced utterance of his intellect, and is eminently *Websterian*. There is a granite-like strength in its construction. . . . Words in his mind are not masters, but instruments. They seem selected, or rather clutched, by the faculty or feeling they serve. . . . He bends language into the shape of his thought, he never accommodates his thought to his language. The grave, high, earnest nature of the man looks out upon us from his well-knit, massive, compact sentences. . . . There is a tough, sinewy strength in his diction which gives it almost muscular power in forcing its way to the heart and understanding. Occasionally his words are of that kind which are called "half-battles, stronger than most men's deeds." In the course of an abstract discussion, or a clear statement, he will throw in a sentence which almost makes us spring to our feet.

In his "English Poets of the Nineteenth Century" notice the tribute he pays to books, beginning "Who shall estimate what vast stores of happiness and improvement the domain of imagination has revealed to us?" Consider his definition of what poetry is, and compare it with

Emerson's to which your attention was directed in the paper on that author.

It is well, and likewise interesting, to get the opinions of different critics on the same subject, and thereby avoid the danger of having a one-sided view. By all means read Stedman's two books, *Victorian Poets* and *Poetry of America*; a part of the ground, but only a small part has been gone over by other critics. Whipple's most elaborate single volume is on the Elizabethan poets only; Lowell's single papers are on selected authors from Chaucer to Keats; Stedman gives "a historical review of the course of British poetry during the present reign," with literary and biographical criticisms, and you can judge of the compass from the fact that there are one hundred and fifty British poets who are named for more or less criticism. For a concise and well-defined account you will find nothing to take its place, and the classification and arrangement, with the side notes, are such as to be of vast help to the understanding of the conditions and the individuals. While reading his comments on any special poem

it will be greatly to your advantage to make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the poem itself; that is the true moment and opportunity for so doing and for gaining intelligent knowledge which under such circumstances will be likely to stay by you, and will be of more worth to you than weeks of miscellaneous, disconnected and superficial reading of the poets.

In his volume on American poets, Stedman reviews the whole ground from the beginning down to the poets whose verse appears from week to week in our periodicals, and he also devotes nine chapters to certain leading poets, one of whom is Lowell, and Lowell's prose, even his criticisms, the very ones we have been considering are here made subjects for this other critic's comment, and very interesting reading it is for you. He says :

But one must spend time in gathering knowledge to give it out richly, and few comprehend what goes to a page of Lowell's manuscript. The page itself, were it a letter or press-report, could be written in a quarter-hour; but suppose it represents, as in one of his greater essays, the result of prolonged studies — the reading, indexing, formulat-

ing works in various languages, upon his shelves or in the Harvard library? Of all this he gives the ultimate quintessence, a distillation fragrant with his own genius. Who can estimate the toil of such work?

Again :

Certainly Lowell is a most suggestive essayist. He sets us a-thinking, and, after a stretch of comment, halts in by-paths, or enlivens us with his sudden wit. He has the intellect, held to be a mark of greatness, that "puts in motion the intellect of others."

Besides the class of book and solitary articles strictly called criticism (which includes a moderate list of names there is not space for, among them Margaret Fuller), there is a new form of half-descriptive, half-critical work which comes under the general title of "studies."

Thus Higginson has twelve very pleasing papers under the head of *Short Studies of American Authors*: G. P. Lathrop has *A Study of Hawthorne*, George Willis Cooke has *George Eliot; A Critical Study of her Life, Writings and Philosophy*: other books are within the same plan of work like Abba Gould Woolson's *George Eliot and her Heroines*.

When you come, some day, to a careful reading of George Eliot's novels, take with them these two volumes by American writers for help towards an estimate of the foremost woman writer of English prose which this century has produced. Cooke's is an exposition of her stories with an analysis of each with extracts, is reasonably fair and more sympathetic than Mrs. Woolson's; while her study, from a different stand-point, directs your thought especially to certain failures and lacks in the great novelist.

Of biographical criticism there are such books as Cooke's on Emerson, Francis H. Underwood's three, on Whittier, Longfellow and Lowell, and many others. All such are of advantage in your reading of best authors. Also books which have literature in general for their theme, like Henry Reed's *Lectures on English Literature*, which, though they do not come strictly within the present American plan, I cannot refrain from commending to you on account of the lovely, teachable spirit manifested all through them. He was Professor of English Literature and Rhetoric in the

University of Pennsylvania, and was lost at sea on his return from Europe in 1854. He was a gentle, refined man with a most reverent love for books; he valued the guidance of any who had shown him where the best was to be found, and he recognized the fact that many though surrounded by books do not know how to use them. He advised only the sweet and sound, that which should be a means of culture, developing all that is best in man and woman. To him the noble English language had a sanctity and dignity of its own which he would not have trifled with: he would not have it brought down, or in any way debased.

Let such a thought be with you as you grow up with a love of books, and you will have a true appreciation not only of the strength of the Saxon idioms and their grand attributes and possibilities in the hands of a master, but you will know how to choose the sweet kernels of truth, and learn to loathe the evil and to distrust everything which confuses the border lines between right and wrong.

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